# DOCUMENT RESUME

| | |
|---|---|
| ED 250 960 | FL 014 752 |
| AUTHOR | Wolfram, Walt; Hatfield, Deborah |
| TITLE | Tense Marking in Second Language Learning: Patterns of Spoken and Written English in a Vietnamese Community. |
| INSTITUTION | Center for Applied Linguistics, Washington, D.C. |
| SPONS AGENCY | National Inst. of Education (ED), Washington, DC. |
| PUB DATE | Dec 84 |
| GRANT | NIE-G-83-0035 |
| NOTE | 185p. |
| PUB TYPE | Reports - Research/Technical (143) |
| EDRS PRICE | MF01/PC08 Plus Postage. |
| DESCRIPTORS | Children; Comparative Analysis; *English (Second Language); *Immigrants; Oral Language; Refugees; *Second Language Learning; *Tenses (Grammar); *Verbs; *Vietnamese; Written Language; Young Adults |
| IDENTIFIERS | District of Columbia |

ABSTRACT

A study of one of the most recurrent and persistent obstacles in learning English as a second language, the use of tense marking, is presented. The analysis is based on audio recordings from a Vietnamese community in Northern Virginia, representing four age ranges from 10 to 55 years, two lengths of U.S. residency (1-3 years and 4-7 years), and both males and females. A range of possible effects on variable tense marking patterns is considered, including surface form distinctions such as regular and irregular forms, phonological shape of those forms, the linguistic context of the forms, lexical items, and relative frequency of the forms. Higher order effects such as foregrounding, episodic boundaries, and tense continuity within narratives are also considered in both spoken and written language. The analysis reveals that surface-level constraints are more significant than the higher-order constraints, and that several principles account for the systematic relationships of variability among forms. Written language constraints show both similarities and differences with spoken language, demonstrating an important lack of isomorphy in the two language registers. The nature of tense marking in interlanguage is shown to have some corollaries with the way tense marking has been treated traditionally in formal instruction. It is concluded, however, that this similarity derives from some general principles of second language acquisition rather than the primary influence of formal instruction on English tense formation. (Author/MSE)

***********************************************************************
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
***********************************************************************

ED250960

# Tense Marking in Second Language Learning:
# Patterns of Spoken and Written English in a Vietnamese Community

NIE-G-83-0035

by

Walt Wolfram
Deborah Hatfield

Center for Applied Linguistics
Washington, D. C.

December 1984

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Center for Applied Linguistics
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

FL014752

The research conducted and reported herein was funded by the National Institute of Education under NIE-G-83-0035 to the Center for Applied Linguistics, Walt Wolfram and Deborah Hatfield, Principal Investigators.

The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the position, policy or endorsement of the funding agency.

Project duration: September 30, 1983 - September 29, 1984

This report may not be reproduced without permission.

# DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY

## TENSE MARKING IN SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING: PATTERNS OF SPOKEN AND WRITTEN ENGLISH IN A VIETNAMESE COMMUNITY

This study examines one of the most recurrent and persistent obstacles in learning English as a second language, the use of English tense marking. The analysis is based upon a set of audio recordings previously collected in the Vietnamese community in Northern Virginia, representing four age ranges (10-12, 15-18, 20-26, and 35-55 years of age), two lengths of residency in the United States (one-three years and four-seven years), and both males and females. A corpus of written language samples provides a basis for comparing the written and spoken language registers.

A range of possible effects on variable tense marking patterns is considered, including surface form distinctions such as regular and irregular forms, the phonological shape of the regular and irregular forms, the linguistic context surrounding the forms, lexical items, and relative frequency of forms. Higher order effects such as foregrounding and backgrounding, episodic boundaries, and tense continuity within narratives are also considered in both spoken and written language.

The analysis reveals that the surface-level constraints are more significant than the higher order constraints, and that several principles account for the systematic relationships of variability among forms. Written language constraints show both similarities and differences with spoken language, demonstrating an important lack of isomorphy in the two language registers. The nature of tense marking in interlanguage is shown to have some corollaries with the way in which tense marking has been treated traditionally in formal instruction, but it is concluded that this similarity derives from some general principles of second language acquisition rather than the primary influence of formal instruction on English tense formation.

# PREFACE

The research reported here was carried out under contract number NIE-G-83-0035 with the National Institute of Education, from September 30, 1983, to September 29, 1984. The aim of the project was to describe the nature of tense marking in second language acquisition as represented by a community of native Vietnamese speakers in Northern Virginia. It builds upon an earlier, more general study of English within the Vietnamese refugee community reported in Christian, Wolfram, and Hatfield (1983). This study, based on the data collected in our earlier investigation, allowed us to consider in detail one of the most essential and obstrusive hurdles in acquiring English as a second language, the mastery of the English tense system.

Since the study reported here was based upon a corpus of data already collected, we are naturally indebted to all those individuals who made the original study possible. However, we shall not repeat the list here of individuals to whom we were indebted in our first study, but simply refer the reader to Christian, Wolfram, and Hatfield (1983) for this important list. The list of persons to whom we are indebted in this phase of the research is somewhat shorter than our original list, but only because those individuals who provided initial input were so generous in their contributions.

Mr. Timothy Riney, of Northern Virginia Community College, was responsible for collecting some additional written language manuscripts specifically for this study, in addition to making comments on parts of the final report. Ms. Gwen Sadler was responsible for some preliminary taxonomies of errors in the writing sample, some of which were examined further in our analysis of tense marking in writing.

As in so many of our studies over the past decade, Dr. Donna Christian provided a sounding board for many of the ideas contained in this report. As an integral part of the original team conducting this study, she encouraged our progress of the research reported here. Sonia Kundert was helpful in the final stages of word processing for the final report and was particularly adept at setting up tables and graphic displays.

Although the co-principal investigators worked as a team throughout the project, each assumed major responsibility for particular chapters. Walt Wolfram assumed major responsibility for writing Chapters Two (A Preliminary Investigation of Tense Marking), Five (Tense Marking and Writing), and Six (Conclusion), and Deborah Hatfield assumed major responsibility for writing Chapters One (Introduction), Three (Tense Marking Variability in Spoken Language), and Four (Analysis of Spoken Language Narratives).

Reactions and comments on the final report are welcomed and encouraged. There is certainly more to be said about the nature of tense marking in spoken and written interlanguage, but we hope that this research will provide an important next step in carrying this analysis forward. We make no pretense to having the final word but hope that we have added to sociolinguistic and educational understanding in some small way.

Walt Wolfram
Deborah Hatfield
Co-Principal Investigators
December, 1984

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

Preface ........................................................ i

Table of Contents ........................................... iii

List of Tables ................................................ v

List of Figures ............................................... vii

Chapter One: Introduction ................................. 1

Illustrations of Unmarked Tense ........................... 2
Vietnamese Community ...................................... 4
The Sample ....................................................... 6
Spoken and Written Data .................................... 8
The Study ......................................................... 9

Chapter Two: A Preliminary Investigation of Tense Marking ..... 11

Variation in Tense Marking ................................. 13
Regular and Irregular Forms ............................... 13
Phonological Convergence and Regular Past Tense ........... 16
Variation in Irregular Verbs ............................... 30
Tense Marking and Higher Level Constraints ................ 39
Conclusion ....................................................... 43

Chapter Three: Tense Marking Variability in Spoken Language ... 45

Introduction ..................................................... 45
Phonological and Grammatical Processes Influencing Tense Marking ..... 49
Variation in Tense Marking ................................. 53
Regular and Irregular Verbs ............................... 54
Variation by Type of Irregular Verb ...................... 71
Hyper-Forms of Tense Marking .............................. 88
Regularization .................................................. 91
Self-Corrections of Tense Marking ....................... 91
Conclusion ....................................................... 92

Chapter Four: Analysis of Spoken Language Narratives .......... 94

Introduction ..................................................... 94
Discourse Studies of Tense ................................. 94
Narrative Analysis ............................................ 98
Conclusion ....................................................... 117

Page

Chapter Five: Tense Marking and Writing ..... 120

- Introduction ..... 120
- Sample ..... 121
- Variability in Tense Marking ..... 125
- Tense Sequencing and Higher Order Constraints ..... 136
- Hyper-Tense Marking ..... 146
  - Pleonastic Tense Marking ..... 147
  - Tense Extension ..... 148
  - Auxiliary Hyper-Forms ..... 149
  - Discourse Hyper-Forms ..... 151

Chapter Six: Conclusion ..... 154

- Surface Constraints ..... 155
- Higher Level Constraints ..... 157
- Spoken and Written Language Tense Marking ..... 158
- Hyper-Forms ..... 159
- Tense Marking and Second Language Pedagogy ..... 161

References ..... 163

Appendix A ..... 167

# LIST OF TABLES

Page

TABLE 2.1. INCIDENCE OF UNMARKED TENSE FOR IRREGULAR AND REGULAR VERB FORMS ... 14
TABLE 2.2. UNMARKED PAST TENSE ON REGULAR FORMS INVOLVING FINAL CLUSTERS: BY FOLLOWING ENVIRONMENT ... 18
TABLE 2.3. COMPARISON OF LEXICAL CLUSTER REDUCTION AND PAST TENSE UNMARKING FOR PAST TENSE CLUSTERS ... 21
TABLE 2.4. COMPARISON OF d SINGLETON ABSENCE ON LEXICAL VERSUS PAST TENSE d ... 25
TABLE 2.5. UNMARKED TENSE FOR FIVE FREQUENTLY OCCURRING IRREGULAR VERBS ... 31
TABLE 2.6. UNMARKED TENSE FOR FOUR TYPES OF IRREGULAR VERBS ... 35
TABLE 2.7. INCIDENCE OF UNMARKED TENSE FOR FREQUENT VERSUS OTHER IRREGULAR VERBS ... 38
TABLE 3.1. SAMPLE ... 45
TABLE 3.2. RESULTS OF INTER-RATER RELIABILITY STUDIES ... 47
TABLE 3.3. INCIDENCE OF UNMARKED TENSE FOR SUBJECTS IN RELIABILITY STUDIES, BY RATER ... 48
TABLE 3.4. INCIDENCE OF UNMARKED PAST TENSE FOR IRREGULAR AND REGULAR VERB FORMS ... 56
TABLE 3.5. INCIDENCE OF UNMARKED TENSE FOR REGULAR AND IRREGULAR VERB FORMS, BY SEX AND LENGTH OF RESIDENCY ... 58
TABLE 3.6. UNMARKED PAST TENSE INVOLVING CONSONANT CLUSTERS, BY FOLLOWING ENVIRONMENT ... 61
TABLE 3.7. INCIDENCE OF FINAL CONSONANT CLUSTER REDUCTION FOR LEXICAL AND PAST TENSE ITEMS ... 63
TABLE 3.8. ABSENCE OF FINAL /d/ ON REGULAR VERB FORMS AND FINAL LEXICAL /d/, BY LENGTH OF RESIDENCY ... 64
TABLE 3.9. ABSENCE OF FINAL /d/ ON REGULAR VERB FORMS ... 65
TABLE 3.10. ABSENCE OF FINAL /Id/ ON REGULAR VERB FORMS ... 67
TABLE 3.11. INCIDENCE OF UNMARKED TENSE FOR FIVE FREQUENTLY OCCURRING VERBS ... 73
TABLE 3.12. INCIDENCE OF UNMARKED TENSE FOR FOUR CATEGORIES OF IRREGULAR VERBS ... 82

Page

TABLE 3.13. INCIDENCE OF UNMARKED TENSE FOR FREQUENT IRREGULAR VERBS VERSUS OTHERS, BY IRREGULAR TYPE AND LENGTH OF RESIDENCY .................................... 86

TABLE 3.14. UNMARKED TENSE FOR MODALS WILL AND CAN, BY AGE AND LENGTH OF RESIDENCY ................................ 87

TABLE 4.1. NARRATIVE, BY CLAUSE TYPE, VERB FORM, AND TENSE MARKING, SUBJECT # 84 .................................... 99

TABLE 4.2. INCIDENCE OF UNMARKED TENSE FOR IRREGULAR AND REGULAR VERBS, SUBJECT # 84 ............................... 103

TABLE 4.3. INCIDENCE OF UNMARKED TENSE FOR IRREGULAR AND REGULAR VERBS, IN INTERVIEW AND NARRATIVE, SUBJECT # 84 .... 105

TABLE 4.4. TENSE MARKING IN FOREGROUND AND BACKGROUND CLAUSES, SUBJECT # 84 .................................... 106

TABLE 4.5. NARRATIVE, BY CLAUSE TYPE, VERB FORM, AND TENSE MARKING, SUBJECT # 78 .................................... 111

TABLE 4.6. INCIDENCE OF UNMARKED TENSE FOR IRREGULAR AND REGULAR VERBS, SUBJECT # 78 ............................... 113

TABLE 4.7. INCIDENCE OF UNMARKED TENSE FOR IRREGULAR AND REGULAR VERBS, IN INTERVIEW AND NARRATIVE, SUBJECT # 78 .... 114

TABLE 4.8. TENSE MARKING IN FOREGROUND AND BACKGROUND CLAUSES, SUBJECT # 78 .................................... 115

TABLE 5.1. PRIMARY WRITING SAMPLES FOR QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS ... 122

TABLE 5.2. UNMARKED TENSE FOR REGULAR AND IRREGULAR VERBS FORMS IN WRITING SAMPLES ................................ 127

TABLE 5.3. INCIDENCE OF PAST TENSE MARKING IN WRITING BASED ON DIFFERENT TYPES OF IRREGULAR FORMS ................. 131

TABLE 5.4. INCIDENCE OF TENSE MARKING BY FOREGROUND AND BACKGROUND: WRITER 21 .............................. 138

TABLE 5.5. INCIDENCE OF TENSE MARKING BY FOREGROUND AND BACKGROUND: WRITER 22 .............................. 139

## LIST OF FIGURES

Page

FIGURE 2.1. UNMARKED TENSE FOR REGULAR AND IRREGULAR VERB FORMS .......... 15

FIGURE 2.2. UNMARKED TENSE FOR FINAL CLUSTERS: BY AGE AND LOR .. 19

FIGURE 2.3. LEXICAL CLUSTER REDUCTION AND PAST TENSE UNMARKING FOR PAST TENSE CLUSTERS: BY AGE AND LOR .......... 22

FIGURE 2.4. COMPARISON OF d SINGLETON ABSENCE ON LEXICAL AND PAST TENSE d: BY AGE AND LOR .......... 26

FIGURE 2.5. COMPARISON OF THREE PHONOLOGICAL SHAPES OF REGULAR PAST AND IRREGULAR PAST TENSE UNMARKING: BY AGE AND LOR .......... 28

FIGURE 2.6. UNMARKED TENSE FOR DIFFERENT IRREGULAR FORMS: SELECT 1-3 LOR SUBJECTS .......... 33

FIGURE 2.7. UNMARKED TENSE FOR DIFFERENT IRREGULAR FORMS: SELECT 4-7 LOR SUBJECTS .......... 33

FIGURE 2.8. UNMARKED TENSE FOR FOUR IRREGULAR VERBS TYPES: BY LOR .......... 36

FIGURE 2.9. DISTRIBUTION OF DIFFERENT SURFACE FORMS IN A NARRATIVE .......... 41

FIGURE 3.1. INCIDENCE OF UNMARKED TENSE FOR REGULAR AND IRREGULAR VERB FORMS, BY AGE AND LENGTH OF RESIDENCY .......... 57

FIGURE 3.2. INCIDENCE OF UNMARKED TENSE FOR REGULAR AND IRREGULAR VERB FORMS, BY AGE, LENGTH OF RESIDENCY AND SEX ... 59

FIGURE 3.3. INCIDENCE OF UNMARKED TENSE FOR IRREGULAR AND REGULAR VERBS .......... 68

FIGURE 3.4. INCIDENCE OF UNMARKED TENSE FOR IRREGULAR AND REGULAR VERBS, FOR THE TWO YOUNGEST GROUPS IN 4-7 LENGTH OF RESIDENCY GROUP .......... 70

FIGURE 3.5. UNMARKED TENSE FOR FIVE FREQUENTLY OCCURRING VERBS, BY LENGTH OF RESIDENCY .......... 74

FIGURE 3.6. PERCENTAGE OF UNMARKED TENSE FOR FIVE FREQUENTLY OCCURRING VERBS, BY INDIVIDUAL SUBJECTS, IN 1-3 LENGTH OF RESIDENCY GROUP .......... 75

FIGURE 3.7. PERCENTAGE OF UNMARKED TENSE FOR FIVE FREQUENTLY OCCURRING VERBS, BY INDIVIDUAL SUBJECTS, IN 4-7 LENGTH OF RESIDENCY GROUP .......... 79

Page

FIGURE 3.8. UNMARKED TENSE FOR THE FOUR CATEGORIES OF IRREGULAR VERBS, BY LENGTH OF RESIDENCY .................... 83

FIGURE 3.9. UNMARKED TENSE FOR THE FOUR CATEGORIES OF IRREGULAR VERBS, BY LENGTH OF RESIDENCY AND AGE ............ 84

FIGURE 3.10. UNMARKED TENSE, BY VERB TYPE AND BY LENGTH OF RESIDENCY ........................................... 89

FIGURE 4.1. TENSE SEQUENCING IN NARRATIVE, SUBJECT # 84 ....... 108

FIGURE 4.2. TENSE SEQUENCING IN NARRATIVE, SUBJECT # 78 ....... 116

FIGURE 5.1. UNMARKED TENSE FOR REGULAR AND IRREGULAR VERB FORMS ............................................ 127

FIGURE 5.2. PAST TENSE MARKING BY IRREGULAR VERB FORM ......... 131

FIGURE 5.3. TENSE UNMARKING BY VERB TYPE FOR THREE INDIVIDUAL WRITERS .......................................... 133

FIGURE 5.4. TENSE SEQUENCING WITHIN DIFFERENT EPISODES: WRITER 21 ......................................... 141

FIGURE 5.5. TENSE MARKING WITHIN DIFFERENT EPISODES: WRITER 22 ......................................... 144

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, research on spoken and written second language (L2) acquisition has led to some exciting new insights into the nature of language learning and interlanguage systems. In addition, these studies have accumulated a substantive data base on L2 acquisition in a number of different language situations. This report contributes to both dimensions of L2 research by describing and analyzing patterns of tense marking in spoken and written language samples collected in the Vietnamese refugee community located in Northern Virginia.

In our previous investigation of the variety of English spoken by Vietnamese refugees (Christian, Wolfram and Hatfield 1983), we analyzed a number of representative phonological and grammatical features and suggested that although the English spoken by the Vietnamese (referred to as Vietnamese English) is moving toward a standard model of English, there are phonological and grammatical features which may remain in their spoken language system due to language learning and language transfer processes. One of these features is unmarked tense, the use of non-past forms in contexts in which past tense marking is required in standard English.

The analysis of tense marking patterns in second language acquisition contexts is important on both a theoretical and descriptive level. On a theoretical level, the analysis of this feature serves as a test case for models of L2 acquisition, including the input of the L1 system to the interlanguage system, the investigation of the interlanguage system itself, the utilization of language learning strategies, and the influence of the socio-cultural and sociolinguistic context on L2 acquisition. Although there are a number of L2 acquisition models (e.g. Dulay and Burt 1974a; Corder 1975; Schumann 1978; Krashen 1978, 1981), several unresolved issues remain which can best be approached via the detailed examination of specific interlanguage structures, such as tense marking.

On a descriptive level, several studies of tense marking patterns have been conducted (e.g. Larsen-Freeman 1975; Frith 1977; Godfrey 1980). However, more comprehensive empirical studies are needed, which examine variable patterns in both the spoken and written mediums, and investigate language usage in a community setting.

We have conducted this research study in an attempt to address some of the issues pertinent to the investigation of tense marking in second language acquisition contexts. Some of these are: How do lower-level (phonological and grammatical) constraints influence tense marking patterns in spoken language? Are spoken and written language tense marking patterns isomorphic? How do discourse level constraints contribute to these patterns? What effect does the sociolinguistic context have on the acquisition of tense marking?

## Illustrations of Unmarked Tense

Before proceeding to our analysis of tense marking, it is important to explain how we define this notion. An example of unmarked tense occurs when a verb which would be marked for tense in mainstream dialects of English is used in its non-past form. In the English verb system, tense is marked on the first element of the verb phrase, that is, either on the verb if there are no auxiliaries, or on the first auxiliary in the phrase. To illustrate the various realizations of tense unmarking, we have extracted examples from our spoken data:

Main Verb

(1)a. At that time a hamburger look really big. (43:4)

b. I arrive here August 12, 1976. (46:1)

c. Before I went to school, and after I finish school I find a job. I go to work. (78:2)

Main Verb be/ be+ing Progressive

(2)a. My father uh - before 1975, he is a federal employee. (73:6)

b. People didn't know who we are and they wouldn't help us. (76:9)

c. But we didn't get all that they are planning to have, we did have good soil...(91:16)

Main Verb have/ have + en Perfective

(3)a. In the year seventy-eight, we do have international club, we have Vietnamese club. (76:6)

b. When we come to in United States, we go uh, we have a sponsor in Manassas. (78:9)

c. I know all the street after six months I have been here. (27:5)

do auxiliary

(4)a. ...and I went to Falls Church and I didn't know anything about ESL. I don't know what it was... (51:27)

b. First, yeah, I don't want to because I lost all my friend and all kind of stuff. (65:9)

c. ...don't have food for eat, don't have water for drink. Three day look like that. Right now I still scare about that. (83:15) (Describing trip to U.S.)

Modal will/ can

(5)a. I can speak very little then and still I can communicate with them. (43:7)

b. It was going like this, really far. And you can hear, I mean, you can see it. (57:8)

c. Because when I just came I don't know where I will send my baby and she very small and my mother take care of her... (83:2)

When some of these examples are examined, it is obvious that tense unmarking is a variable rather than a categorical phenomenon. For example, in (1c), (2b) and (2c) both marked and unmarked forms occur in the same utterance. Our analysis in the following chapters focuses on patterns of variation, and the factors that influence that variation.

In our investigation of unmarked tense, we utilize a number of factors to determine whether or not past tense marking would be required in standard English. One of these factors is the presence of a temporal adverb in the context of the verb, which indicates reference to past time, as in (3a). In other examples, agreement of past tense marking (with other verbs in the context) is required in standard English, as in (4a). Finally, at times the discourse context requires the use of past tense marking, as in (4c), which is a portion of a narrative describing the subject's trip to the United States. For some instances in our data, we could not determine whether or not past tense marking should have been used. We chose not to tabulate these indeterminant cases.

## Vietnamese Community

The locus of our study is the Vietnamese community in Northern Virginia. This area, directly across the Potomac River from Washington, DC, includes Arlington County, Fairfax County and the cities of Falls Church and Alexandria. The community is described in detail in Christian, Wolfram and Hatfield (1983), so we will only summarize briefly its characteristics here.

Prior to 1975 there were few Vietnamese living in the United States, and there was virtually no established community of Vietnamese (Haines et al 1981). After the Viet Cong took over Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh City) in April 1975, Vietnamese refugees began to move into the Washington, DC area, many of whom were sponsored by Americans who had been involved in business or government jobs in South Vietnam. Some of those arriving in 1975 had Vietnamese relatives or friends living in the area. The number of Vietnamese residing in the Washington, DC area has grown steadily since that time. An August 1983 article in the Washington Post estimated that there were at that time 18,000 to 20,000 Vietnamese in the Washington area (Moore and Dumas 1983), and the population has probably increased somewhat since then.

The Vietnamese residing in Northern Virginia tend to be from a more privileged background (economically, educationally, and socially) than some of the Vietnamese who settled in other regions of the United States. This is particularly true of those who arrived in this country between 1975 and 1977. Those who left Vietnam since 1978 and have settled in the area fled Vietnam more often for economic reasons than political reasons, and were less educated than those who came earlier.

There is a dense concentration of Vietnamese refugees in some areas of Northern Virginia. Some of the factors contributing to this concentration are low-cost housing and the need to have access to public transportation. This concentration of Vietnamese refugees has encouraged the maintenance of both Vietnamese cultural values and the Vietnamese language among community members, although both American values and English monolingualism have made in-roads in the community.

Some of the Vietnamese cultural values are particularly important as influences on the acquisition of English by the refugees generally, and have implications for the acquisition of English tense-marking patterns specifically. One of the main factors determining Vietnamese cultural values is the ethical system, derived to a large extent from Confucianism. One component of this system is reverence for teachers and a strong emphasis on learning. Teachers are revered and respected by both parents and children, and are ranked just below kings and above fathers in the honor structure. This respect for teachers has been maintained by many of the Vietnamese students who are now in schools in the United States. Their attitudes towards learning are quite positive, and many Vietnamese students are industrious, spending long hours studying. The Indochinese learning style tends to be based on acquiring knowledge from books rather than through practical experience. The emphasis is on taking notes, memorizing them and reciting them verbatim in the classroom (Dam 1980; History and Culture of Vietnam). This learning method may influence the acquisition of some L2 language forms, including tense marking, with more importance placed on rote learning versus the habituation of patterns.

Another Vietnamese cultural trait is to value hard work. As the Vietnamese themselves report, they see the unique and positive aspects of their character to be reliance on family, and the ability to work hard (Haines et al 1981). This trait also contributes to the tendency of Vietnamese to industriously study English and other school subjects.

Our description here of Vietnamese cultural traits is, of necessity, brief and overly general. However, it provides some insight into what we believe to be factors influencing the acquisition of English by the Vietnamese refugees who participated in our study, as well as by implication, the other Vietnamese now residing in the United States. We examine in later chapters the contribution that these factors may make in the acquisition of English tense marking patterns.

## The Sample

Our study is based on both spoken data (tape-recorded interviews) and written data (writing samples) collected from members of the Vietnamese community in Northern Virginia. Our subjects were chosen to reflect several dimensions important for research in second language acquisition. The characteristics of the subjects for both the spoken and the written language study are described more fully in the following chapters, but will be summarized here.

The audio tape-recorded interviews were done with 93 members of the Vietnamese community. Four age groups were included to represent different ages at which the subjects were exposed to English, as well as to represent various stages in second language development as related to age. The first age group (10-12 years) is one in which much language variation can be expected. The second age group (15-18 years) is representative of speakers whose language usage is normally influenced by peer group pressure to conform. The third age group (20-26 years) represents those whose language usage is stabilizing according to adult norms, and the fourth group (35-55 years) represents the older adult language models which our younger speakers have in the Vietnamese community. These adults are expected to use Vietnamese much more extensively than English, and, therefore, are expected to have the lowest amount of English language proficiency of all of our speakers. It is important to mention that many of the older people whom we contacted to request that they participate in the study did not agree to do so. The reason that most gave for not participating was that their English was not adequate to allow them to be interviewed. Therefore, the older group is not a representative sample of the adults in the community, but only of those who had enough confidence in their English proficiency to participate in the interview. This probably led to some skewing in the data, as this group appears more proficient in English than we would expect a representative group of speakers their age to be.

In addition to the factor of age, our selection of speakers for the sample was based on the length of time the subjects had spent in the United States. Because not many of the Vietnamese refugees had had exposure to English prior to their arrival, the length of residency (LOR) correlated highly with their actual amount of exposure to English. In our study we differentiated between those who had been in the United States for one to three years, versus four to seven years at the time of the interview. Most interviews were conducted during 1982.

Both males and females were represented among all of the age levels and the length of residency groups. By dividing subjects among each of these categories we arrived at 16 cells; four age levels, two lengths of residency, and both genders.

As mentioned before, we interviewed a total of 93 members of the Vietnamese community. Some of the subjects were contacted through English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) classes in elementary school, high schools and adult education centers. However, most were contacted through their friends and relatives who had already been interviewed, using an informal social network to identify the pool of potential subjects. It should be noted that efforts were made to exclude as subjects, community members who were from Vietnam but were ethnic Chinese, in an attempt to eliminate the additional factor of having subjects with Chinese as their native language. A subset of 32 interviews was chosen for the analysis of tense marking in the spoken data (Chapter Three).

For the writing study, we collected over 50 writing samples from subjects 10 to 25 years of age, male and female, most of whom had been in the United States from one to three years when the samples were collected. Some of the writers were also subjects in the spoken language portion of our study, but we did not attempt to control this relationship because of practical problems in data collection.

## Spoken and Written Data

In our research study the spoken data utilized were the tape-recorded interviews conducted with the subjects described above. The interviews were of the type used in other sociolinguistic studies (e.g. Labov 1972; Fasold 1972; Wolfram and Christian 1979). A questionnaire was devised which included topics such as life in Vietnam, life in the United States, comparisons of the two, and language attitudes, maintenance and shift in the community (see Appendix A). Because many of the questions used were in reference to past events, much speech was elicited of the type which requires past tense marking in mainstream dialects of English. Therefore, it served as excellent data for our study.

When we conducted our first study of the English used in the Vietnamese community (Christian et al 1983), we rated each of the 93 tapes from the interviews on the basis of rapport of the speaker with the interviewer, quality of the tape-recording, and amount of speech by the subject. Those with relatively high ratings in each of the 16 cells were chosen for our first study. Each tape used in the analysis was typescripted in a preliminary way and then listened to by the researchers for each instance of potential tense marking. The methodology used in the spoken language study is described more thoroughly in Chapter Three.

The written language samples were collected from teachers in elementary and high schools, and from adult education centers in the Northern Virginia area. The writing samples included narratives, book reports, and stories. They are analyzed in Chapter Five.

## The Study

In Chapter Two through Chapter Six we report our research results on tense marking in the spoken and written data. Chapter Two is a preliminary investigation of tense marking, based on an analysis of 16 tape-recorded interviews. In this study a number of surface level constraints on tense marking are examined, and a probe into discourse level constraints is initiated. In Chapter Three a more broad-based study is undertaken, based on an analysis of 32 of the tape-recorded interviews. In this chapter the investigation of surface level constraints is extended and refined. Chapter Four presents an analysis of several representative spoken language narratives extracted from the interview data. The analysis attempts to replicate several analytical approaches that have been utilized in the discourse analysis of second language acquisition data, while taking into account the analysis of surface level constraints undertaken in previous chapters. Chapter Five discusses the surface and discourse level constraints which were found to be operating in the written language samples and compares these results with those found in our spoken language analysis. The final chapter, Chapter Six, discusses the implications of our research for a model of tense marking in interlanguage and its relationship to pedagogical instruction.

# CHAPTER TWO

## A PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION OF TENSE MARKING

There are few structures in English L2 acquisition that are more prominent than tense unmarking. Virtually all profiles of L2 acquisition in English cite it as a prominent characteristic of interlanguage (Burt and Kiparsky 1972; Krashen 1982) and most pedagogues consider it a major hurdle to overcome in L2 learning. Furthermore, there is ample evidence to support the conclusion that the characteristic unmarking in sentences such as _Last year he take the boat_ or _Yesterday he is tired_ can be found regardless of the L1 background of the speaker (Dulay and Burt 1974a, 1974b; Bailey, Madden, and Krashen 1975). Its status as an interlanguage structure is relatively secure, and its descriptive and pedagogical significance unchallenged. Unfortunately, it is sometimes assumed that the precise distribution of unmarked tense in interlanguage has been established and only descriptive refinements of its role are required. Most recently, these refinements have focused on the role of tense marking in larger linguistic units, such as the discourse (Larsen-Freeman 1975; Godfrey 1980; Wolfson 1982; Kumpf 1984), and some higher level constraints on tense marking have been offered. While this study does not dispute the possibility of such constraints, the empirical facts suggest that the direction of these studies is premature, and that a number of surface level constraints must be considered prior to the isolation of these higher level constraints. The nature of these relatively low level constraints shall be considered here on the empirical basis of data collected from several different subgroups of native Vietnamese speakers learning English as an L2. After examining some of the structural facts constraining the incidence of tense marking in L2 acquisition, we shall return to the question of tense marking and higher level constraints. For this preliminary investigation, only 16 of our subjects will be considered. In our more extensive investigation in Chapter Three, the sample will extended to 32 subjects.

The L1 background of speakers in this sample represents an instance in which the native language differs markedly from the target system. In Vietnamese, tense marking is not an obligatory category, and the time-aspect of a given sentence need not be marked overtly (Thompson 1965:209). Although Vietnamese has several particles that may mark temporality, it has no system of morphological tense marking remotely comparable to English. It thus represents a system where the L1 and L2 are highly divergent at the point of comparison rather than typologically similar. We certainly have reason to believe that the dynamics of interlanguage tense marking will be comparable regardless of the source language, but choose to represent this more divergent case.

## Variation in Tense Marking

As a starting basis for our description of tense marking, we acknowledge that it is a variable phenomenon. All of the speakers have cases in which obligatory tense marking in the target language is overtly marked for tense and cases where it is unmarked. While we cannot predict for a given instance whether or not it will be marked for tense, our empirical search will attempt to establish systematic constraints which favor or inhibit the variable marking of tense. We will then propose that these constraints are an essential dimension of the dynamic process of tense marking in interlanguage. In this approach, the study aligns itself with the tradition of 'variation theory' within sociolinguistics (Labov 1969; Cedergren and Sankoff 1974; Sankoff 1978), particularly as it has been applied to L2 learning situations (L. Dickerson 1975; W. Dickerson 1976; Wolfram 1978). Thus, we appeal to a quantitative dimension of variation as the empirical basis for establishing systematic relationships of 'more' and 'less' with fluctuating forms.

## Regular and Irregular Forms

The most obvious case of structured variability in tense marking, and the one traditionally recognized in L2 studies of this phenomenon, is the distinction between regular and irregular verb forms (Dulay and Burt 1974a,b; Krashen 1982). Most studies recognize that tense marking is favored with irregular forms in the earlier stages of L2 learning. To confirm this pattern here, we have tabulated for each subject the instances of past tense marking for all regular and irregular forms. The totals are given in Table 2.1, with a summary graph of the pattern by age and LOR in Figure 2.1. In the graph, each point represents the average for the two speakers in that cell.

| AGE | SUB | IRREGULAR |  | REGULAR |  |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  | Unm/Tot | % Unm | Unm/Tot | % Unm |
|  |  | 1-3 Year LOR |  |  |  |
| 10-12 | 33 | 168/324 | 51.9 | 59/63 | 93.7 |
|  | 34 | 141/298 | 47.3 | 56/61 | 91.8 |
| 15-18 | 39 | 120/290 | 41.4 | 76/80 | 95.0 |
|  | 47 | 41/89 | 46.1 | 10/13 | 76.9 |
| 20-25 | 27 | 116/178 | 65.2 | 49/51 | 96.1 |
|  | 58 | 123/211 | 58.3 | 97/100 | 97.0 |
| 35-55 | 24 | 16/23 | 69.6 | 10/10 | 100.0 |
|  | 91 | 48/127 | 37.8 | 35/36 | 97.2 |
| Total |  | 773/1540 | 50.2 | 392/414 | 94.7 |
|  |  | 4-7 Year LOR |  |  |  |
| 10-12 | 19 | 14/242 | 5.8 | 25/58 | 43.1 |
|  | 42 | 12/131 | 9.2 | 6/23 | 26.1 |
| 15-18 | 29 | 18/156 | 11.5 | 21/26 | 80.8 |
|  | 50 | 13/55 | 23.6 | 17/24 | 70.8 |
| 20-25 | 77 | 43/128 | 33.6 | 37/42 | 88.1 |
|  | 89 | 34/103 | 33.0 | 26/27 | 96.3 |
| 35-55 | 74 | 32/78 | 41.0 | 22/24 | 91.7 |
|  | 79 | 8/32 | 25.0 | 7/11 | 63.6 |
| Total |  | 174/9251 | 18.8 | 161/235 | 68.5 |

Table 2.1 Incidence of Unmarked Tense for Irregular and Regular Verb Forms

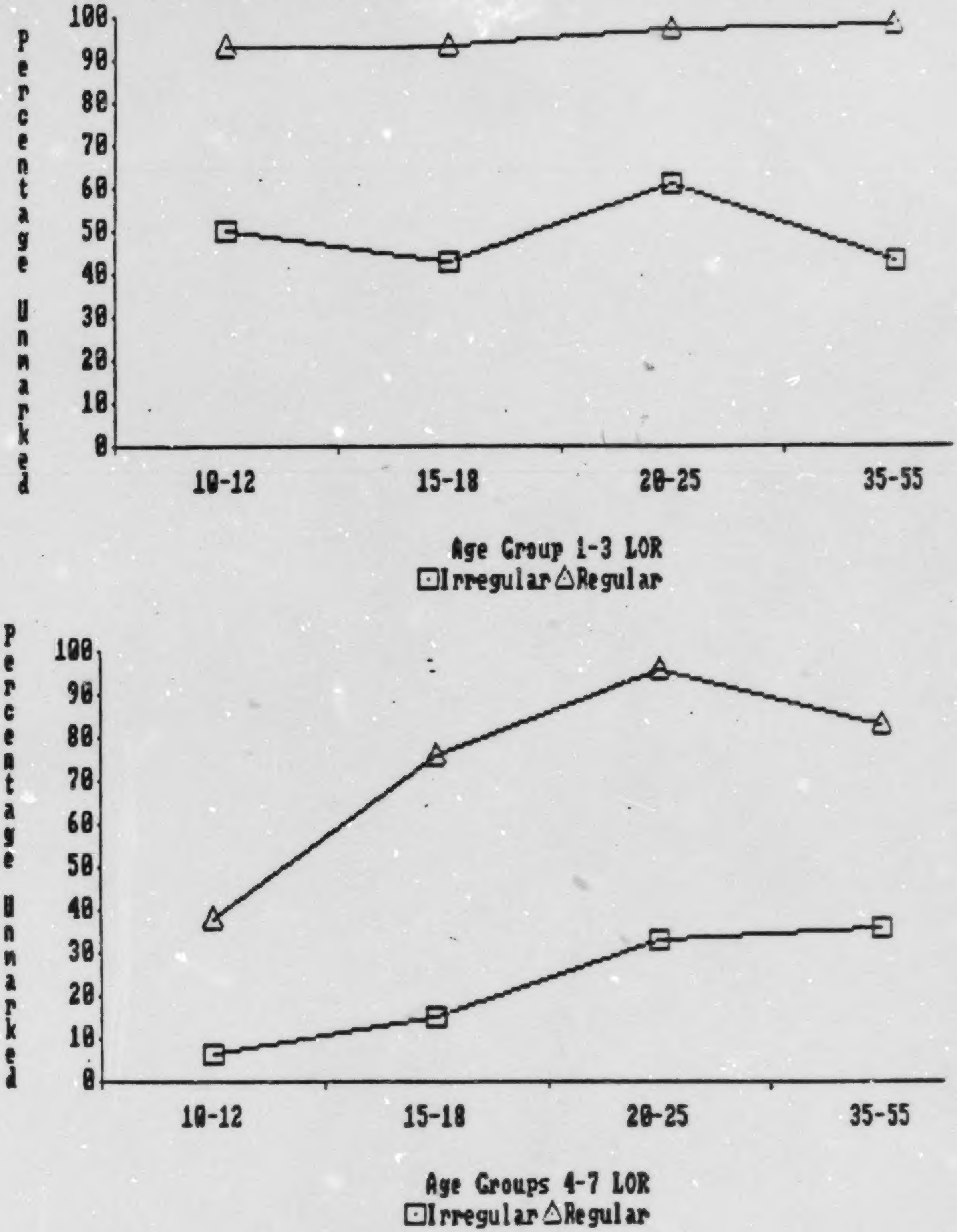


Fig. 2.1 Unmarked Tense for Regular and Irregular Verb Forms

The constraint of irregular versus regular is clearly upheld in this study, as every speaker in the study, regardless of age or LOR, demonstrates a preference for marking irregular forms. This constraint on variability is even operative for the youngest speakers who have been here the longest, a group that is typically quite proficient in English. There is little variation in this relationship, apparently regardless of stage of L2 acquisition.

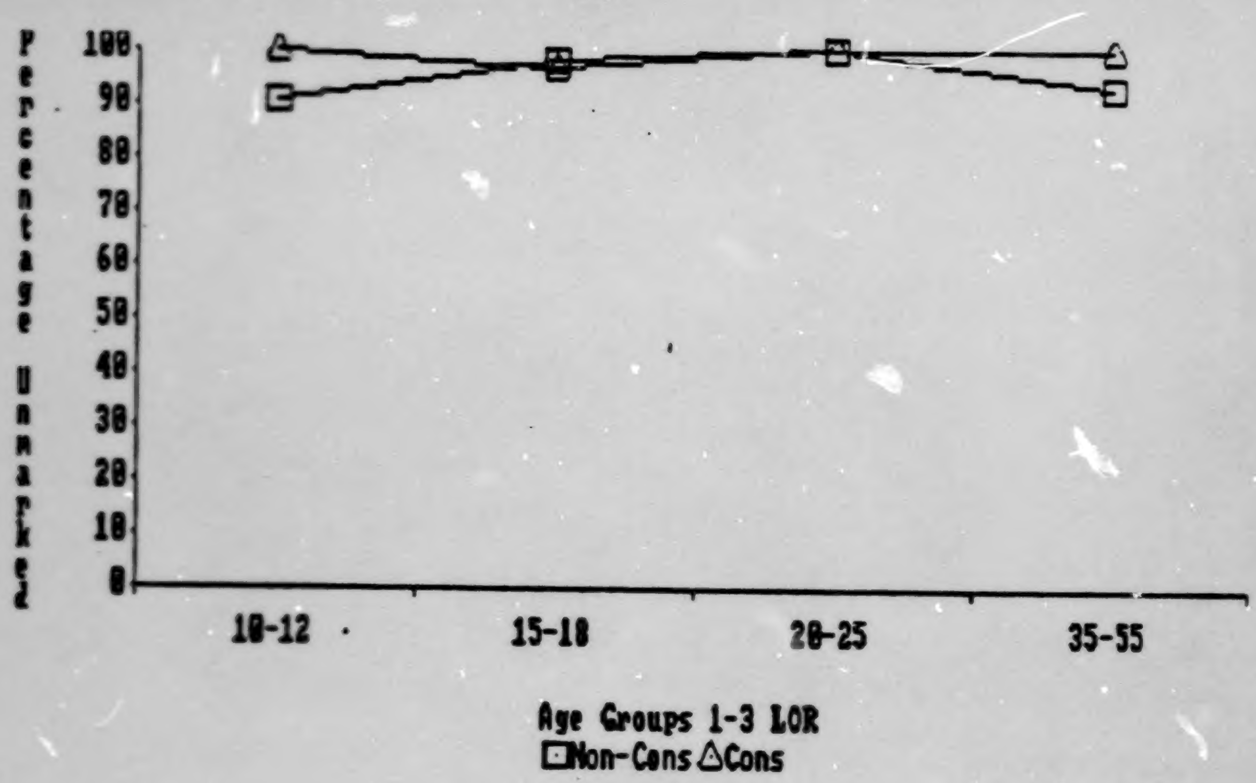
## Phonological Convergence and Regular Past Tense

Although most considerations of L2 learning have been content to consider regular past tense forms as a unitary structural type, it is essential to examine regular past tense forms further on the basis of their different phonological shapes. This is necessary because some shapes of past tense formation may be subject to phonologically-based deletion completely independent of grammatical unmarking. For example, one of the predominant phonological shapes that results from the addition of a past tense suffix is a consonant cluster. The /t/ or /d/ following a voiceless or voiced consonant, as in /kIst/ 'kissed' or /rezd/ 'raised', respectively, is a consonant cluster susceptible to the phonological process of cluster reduction. This phonological process will result in a form such as /rez/ for 'raised' or /kIs/ for 'kissed' completely apart from the grammatical process of unmarking. In fact, this process operates in many dialects of English (cf. Wolfram and Fasold 1974: 129; Guy 1980:7), including standard dialects under certain conditions. The surface output is the same as those regular forms unmarked for tense grammatically. L2 learners may also be subject to this phonological process, particularly those whose L1 does not have final clusters (Tarone 1980; Sato 1983). When we have a grammatical process and a phonological process that independently produce the same surface form we have what is referred to as 'convergent processes'(cf. Wolfram 1984:34). In this study, the possibility of convergence is quite high, since the source language, Vietnamese, has no word-final consonant clusters. Thus, a given case such as /kIs/ for 'kissed' might result from the phonological process of cluster reduction or the grammatical process of tense unmarking.

The possible intersection of the phonological process with the grammatical process to account for surface unmarking can be documented by considering two features that characterize phonologically derived forms (Fasold 1971). Typically, phonological processes are sensitive to surrounding phonological contexts. It has been found that cluster reduction is favored when the following word begins with a consonant as opposed to a non-consonant, in most cases a following vowel (i.e.kissed me will become /kIs mi/ more often than kissed it will become /kIs It/)(Labov 1969; Wolfram and Fasold 1974). To examine the relationship of this constraint for tense marking in our sample, we have tabulated the past tense clusters on the basis of this breakdown. The figures are given in Table 2.2 and Figure 2.2.

| AGE | SUBJECT | FOLLOWING NON-CONS | | FOLLOWING CONS | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Unm/Tot | % Unm | Unm/Tot | %Unm |
| | | 1-3 Year LOR | | | |
| 10-12 | 33 | 27/30 | 90.0 | 18/18 | 100.0 |
| | 34 | 34/37 | 91.9 | 11/11 | 100.0 |
| 15-18 | 39 | 32/33 | 97.0 | 26/27 | 96.3 |
| | 47 | 7/7 | 100.0 | 2/2 | 100.0 |
| 20-25 | 27 | 19/19 | 100.0 | 14/14 | 100.0 |
| | 56 | 30/31 | 96.8 | 18/18 | 100.0 |
| 35-55 | 24 | 4/4 | 100.0 | 2/2 | 100.0 |
| | 91 | 10/11 | 90.9 | 19/19 | 100.0 |
| TOTAL | | 163/172 | 94.8 | 110/111 | 99.1 |
| | | 4-7 Year LOR | | | |
| 10-12 | 19 | 7/22 | 31.8 | 12/13 | 92.3 |
| | 42 | 5/18 | 27.8 | 1/3 | 33.3 |
| 15-18 | 29 | 8/10 | 80.0 | 5/5 | 100.0 |
| | 50 | 4/8 | 50.0 | 10/11 | 90.9 |
| 20-25 | 77 | 18/20 | 90.0 | 9/9 | 100.0 |
| | 89 | 10/10 | 100.0 | 5/5 | 100.0 |
| 35-55 | 74 | 5/7 | 71.4 | 5/5 | 100.0 |
| | 79 | 3/5 | 60.0 | 2/2 | 100.0 |
| TOTAL | | 60/100 | 60.0 | 49/53 | 92.5 |

Table 2.2 Unmarked Past Tense on Regular Forms Involving Final Clusters; By Following Environment



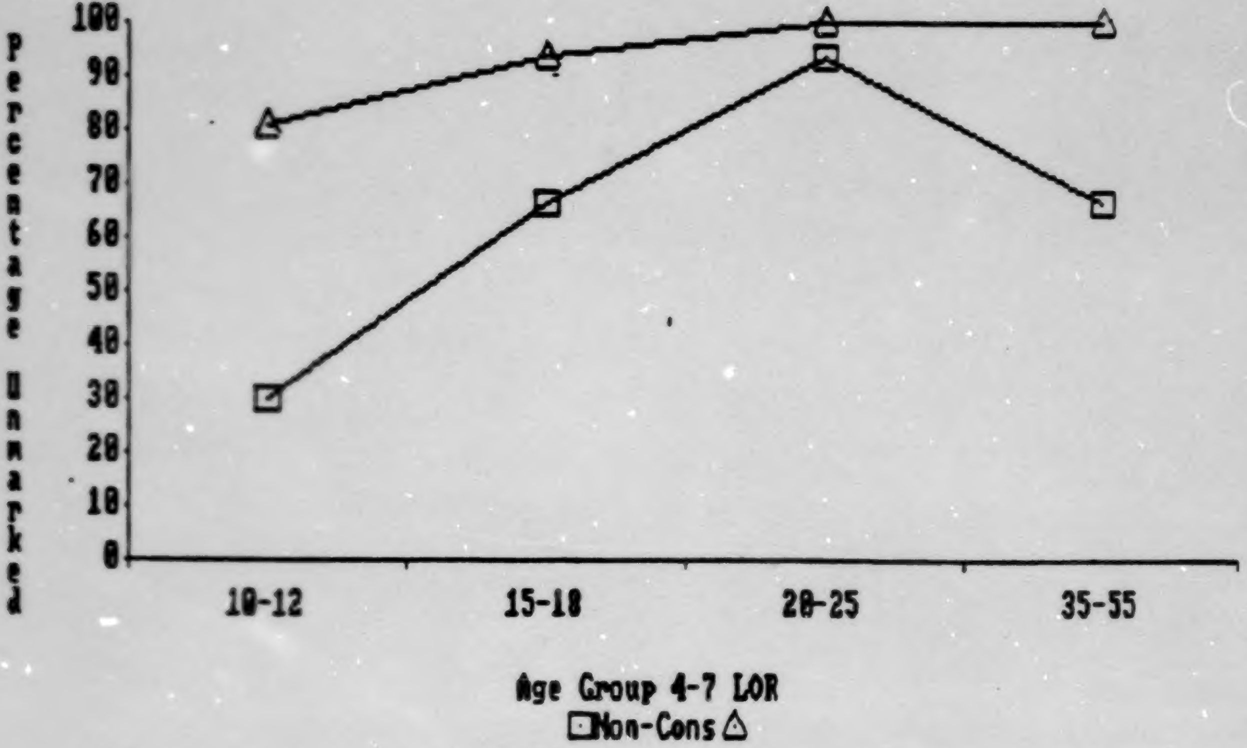


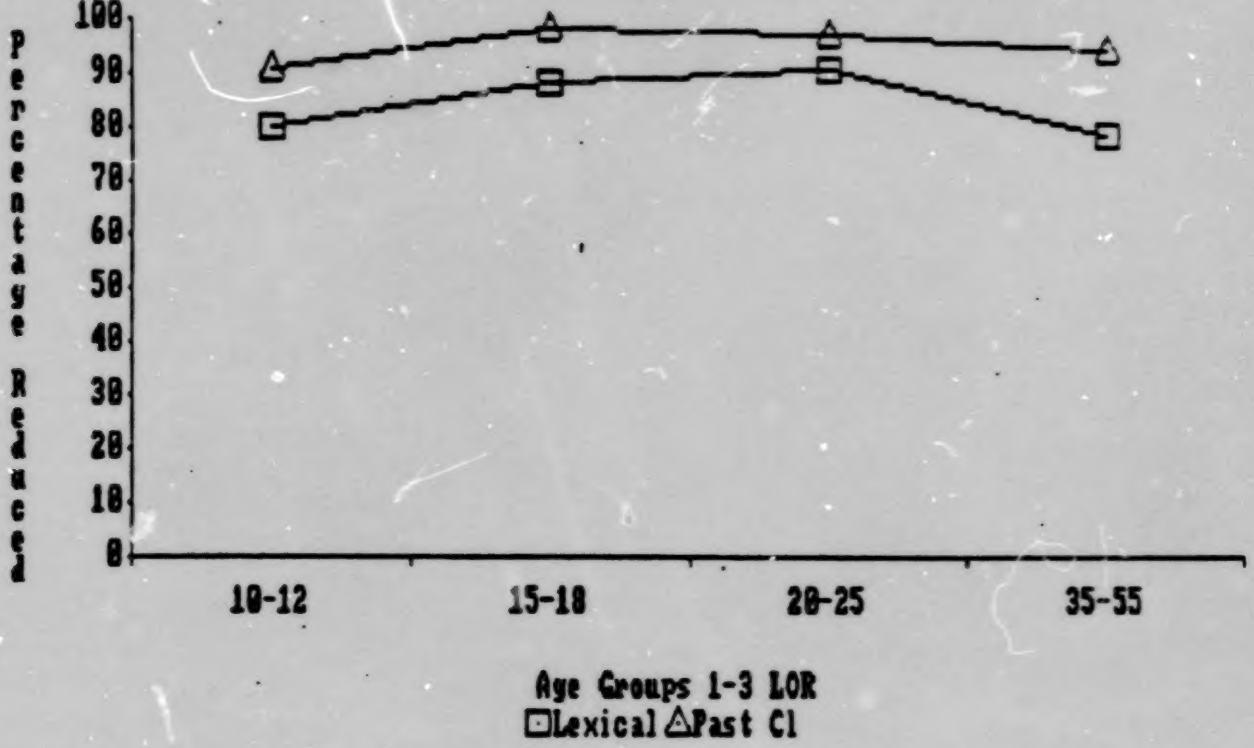
Fig. 2.2 Unmarked Tense for Final Clusters: By Age and LOR

An interesting pattern is observed in Table 2.2 and Figure 2.2. Although all groups tend to favor past tense absence when the cluster is followed by a consonant, the strength of the constraint is most obvious for the 4-7 year LOR. While the role of the phonological process cannot be ignored at any stage of acquisition, it appears that it takes on an increased role vis-a-vis the grammatical process as overall proficiency increases. In the incipient stages, the processes may converge, with the grammatical process taking precedence, while in the latter stages the phonological process takes on increased significance.

The second characteristic of phonological processes is that they apply to certain phonological shapes regardless of grammatical function. When phonological processes affect grammatical forms, we expect the process to occur as well with parallel phonological forms not having a grammatical function. For example, if the process of cluster reduction affects past tense forms such as /kIst/ and /rezd/, we expect it to apply to lexical clusters such as /lIst/ 'list' or /wInd/ 'wind' as well. To examine this relationship, we have broken down cluster reduction in Table 2.3 and Figure 2.3 in terms of 'lexical' (i.e. monomorphemic) and past tense (i.e. bimorphemic) clusters. For this tabulation, we consider only clusters that are followed by a vowel, to control for the effect of the following phonological context. Only the first 20 instances of lexical clusters are tabulated for each subject.

| AGE | SUBJECT | LEXICAL CLUSTERS | | PAST CLUSTERS | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Abs/Tot | % Abs | Unm/Tot | % Unm |
| | | 1-3 Year LOR | | | |
| 10-12 | 33 | 14/20 | 70.0 | 27/30 | 90.0 |
| | 34 | 18/20 | 90.0 | 34/37 | 91.9 |
| 15-18 | 39 | 13/14 | 92.9 | 32/33 | 97.0 |
| | 47 | 17/20 | 85.0 | 7/7 | 100.0 |
| 20-25 | 27 | 17/20 | 85.0 | 19/19 | 100.0 |
| | 58 | 17/18 | 94.4 | 30/31 | 96.8 |
| 35-55 | 24 | 10/16 | 62.5 | 4/4 | 100.0 |
| | 91 | 18/20 | 90.0 | 10/11 | 90.9 |
| TOTAL | | 124/148 | 83.8 | 163/172 | 95.9 |
| | | 4-7 Year LOR | | | |
| 10-12 | 19 | 11/20 | 55.0 | 7/22 | 31.8 |
| | 42 | 10/20 | 50.0 | 5/18 | 27.8 |
| 15-18 | 29 | 13/18 | 72.2 | 8/10 | 80.0 |
| | 50 | 17/20 | 85.0 | 4/8 | 50.0 |
| 20-25 | 77 | 14/20 | 70.0 | 18/20 | 90.0 |
| | 89 | 19/20 | 95.0 | 10/10 | 100.0 |
| 35-55 | 74 | 18/20 | 90.0 | 5/7 | 71.4 |
| | 79 | 13/15 | 86.7 | 3/5 | 60.0 |
| TOTAL | | 115/153 | 75.2 | 60/100 | 63.9 |

Table 2.3 Comparison of Lexical Cluster Reduction and Past Tense Unmarking for Past Tense Clusters



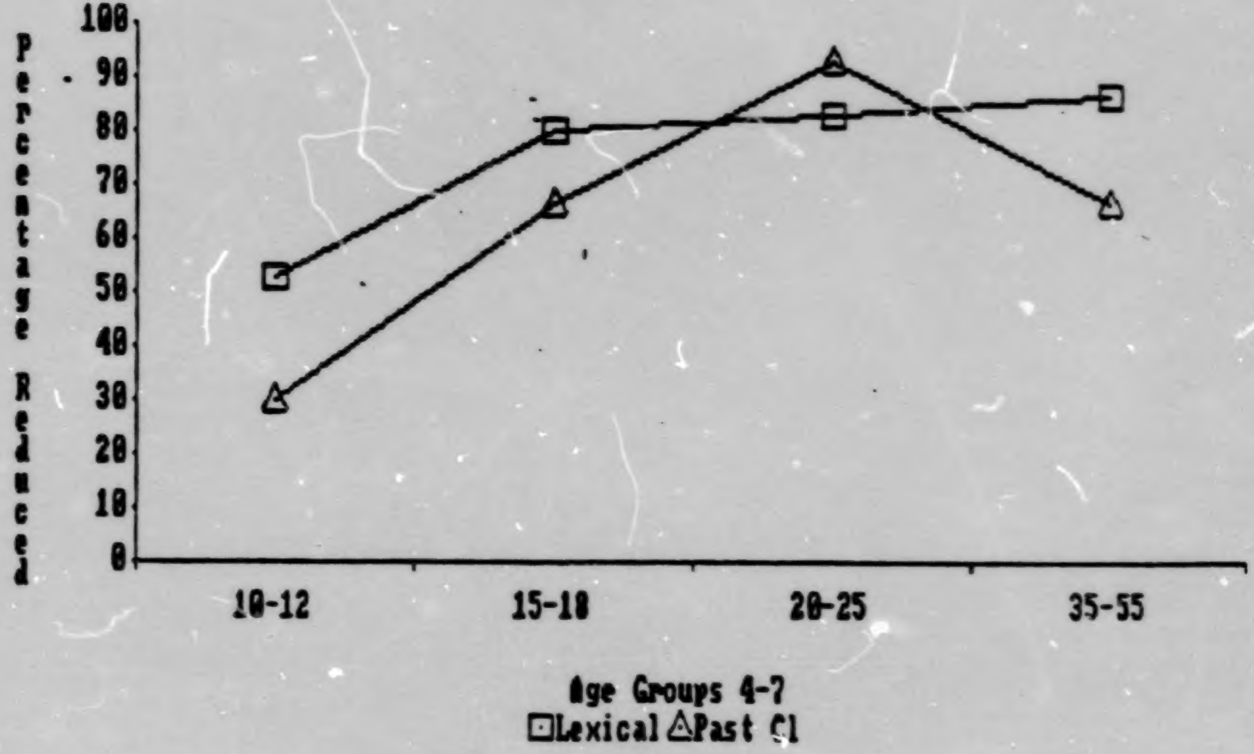


Fig. 2.3 Lexical Cluster Reduction and Past Tense Unmarking for Past Tense Clusters: By Age and LOR

Table 2.3 and Figure 2.3 substantiate the unity of the phonological process of cluster reduction in this sample since both lexical and past tense clusters are affected by reduction. At the same time, the distribution pattern supports the fact that both the phonological and grammatical processes converge to account for surface tense unmarking. Research among groups of native speakers of English has shown that in cases where a phonological process is the exclusive explanation for the absence of a grammatical marker, the process is more frequently applied to lexical than to grammatical-marking forms (Wolfram 1973; Guy 1980). For the the 1-3 year LOR group in our sample, however, the converse pattern is found. That is, there is more surface reduction on past tense forms than lexical clusters. This is attributable to the fact that grammatically-based tense unmarking and phonological reduction are operating in an additive way. With more fluent speakers, as represented by the 4-7 LOR group, lexical clusters tend to be reduced more frequently than past tense forms. This again suggests that the grammatical process takes precedence in the earlier stages, and the phonological process increases in importance in the later stages. Neither can be ignored, but they may take on different roles as L2 acquisition proceeds.

The process of cluster reduction is not the only possible source for convergent processes in regular past tense. Final /d/ singletons, as in /sted/ 'stayed' or /frid/ 'freed', may also be subject to a convergent phonological process since the source language does not have an isomorphic correspondence for English word-final /d/ singleton. However, it does have a voiceless counterpart /t/, which makes the two systems closer for final /d/ than they are for final consonant clusters. In Table 2.4 and Figure 2.4, we have tabulated the incidence of /d/ for regular past tense forms (e.g. /sted/ 'stayed') and lexical /d/ (e.g. /bEd/ 'bed',/lod/ 'load'), similar to the way we did for the consonant clusters mentioned above. In our tabulation, we consider only the distinction between the absence of /d/ and non-absence. This means that the voiceless counterpart of /d/, some phonetic form of /t/ (typically an unreleased stop [t̚] or glottal [ʔ]), is considered as /d/ presence. This seems appropriate since the /t/ realization of target language *d* would still phonetically mark past tense. In other words, items such as /stet/ for 'stayed' or /frit/ for 'freed' would be classified as past tense even though a voiceless correspondence is produced. In our tabulation, only the first 25 instances of lexical /d/ are tabulated for each subject.

| AGE | SUBJECT | LEXICAL d | | PAST TENSE d | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Abs/Tot | % Abs | Unm/Tot | % Unm |
| | | 1-3 Year LOR | | | |
| 10-12 | 33 | 7/25 | 28.0 | 13/14 | 92.9 |
| | 34 | 4/25 | 16.0 | 11/13 | 84.6 |
| 15-18 | 39 | 4/25 | 16.0 | 12/14 | 85.7 |
| | 47 | 3/25 | 12.0 | 0/2 | 0.0 |
| 20-25 | 27 | 8/25 | 32.0 | 14/16 | 87.5 |
| | 58 | 7/14 | 50.0 | 17/19 | 89.5 |
| 35-55 | 24 | 2/16 | 12.5 | 1/1 | 100.0 |
| | 91 | 12/25 | 48.0 | 5/5 | 100.0 |
| TOTAL | | 47/180 | 26.1 | 73/84 | 86.9 |
| | | 4-7 Year LOR | | | |
| 10-12 | 19 | 4/25 | 16.0 | 1/9 | 11.1 |
| | 42 | 4/18 | 22.2 | 0/1 | 0.0 |
| 15-18 | 29 | 13/23 | 56.5 | 7/9 | 77.8 |
| | 50 | 7/25 | 28.0 | 1/2 | 50.0 |
| 20-25 | 77 | 4/25 | 16.0 | 5/5 | 100.0 |
| | 89 | 12/25 | 48.0 | 9/9 | 100.0 |
| 35-55 | 74 | 2/8 | 25.0 | 2/2 | 100.0 |
| | 79 | 10/25 | 40.0 | 2/4 | 50.0 |
| TOTAL | | 56/174 | 32.2 | 27/41 | 65.9 |

Table 2.4 Comparison of d Singleton Absence on Lexical *versus* Past Tense d.

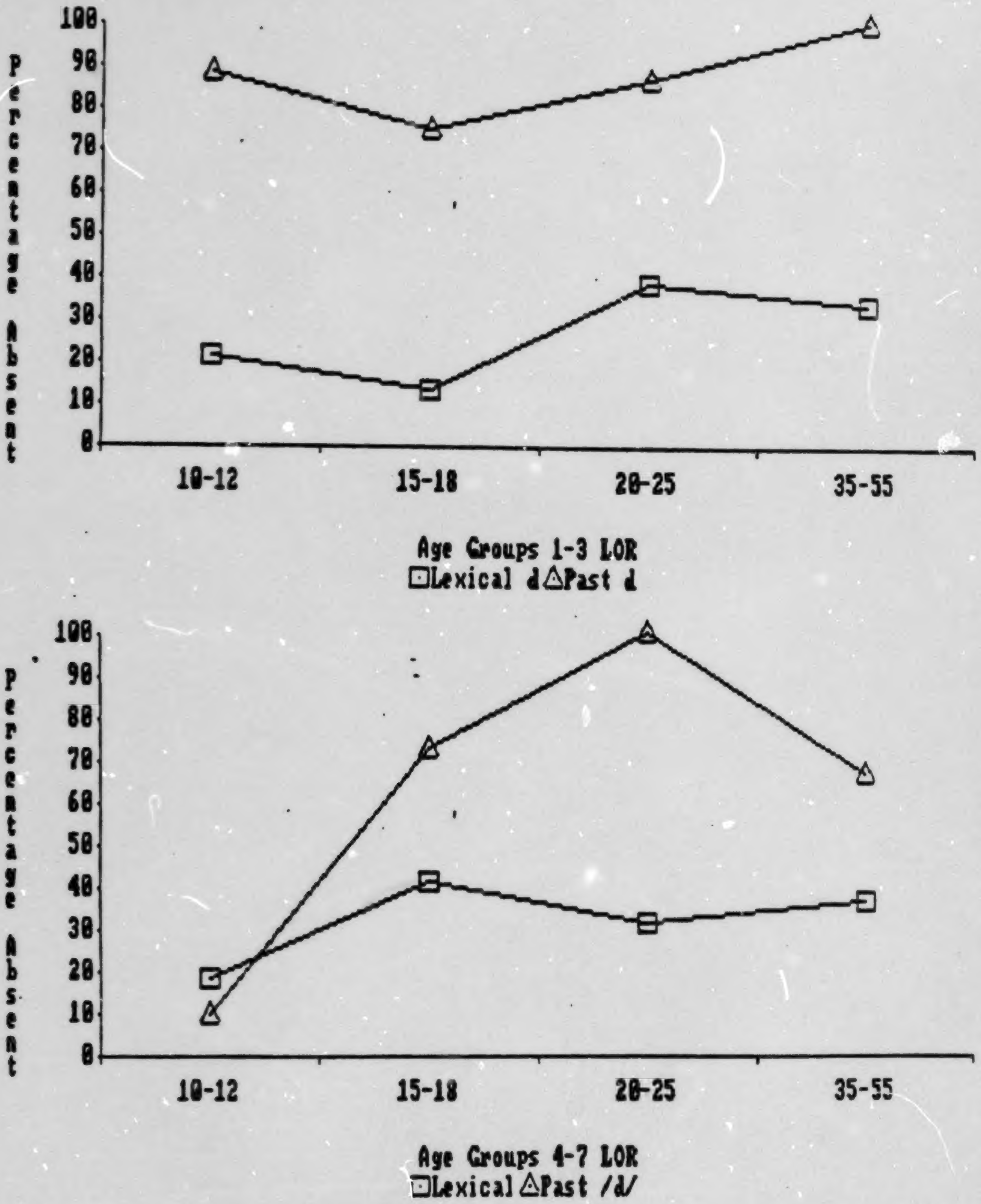


Figure 2.4 Comparison of d Singleton Absence on Lexical and Past Tense d: By Age and LOR

Table 2.4 indicates that lexical /d/ absence is much less prominent than past tense /d/ absence, although it does occur to some extent among all groups. Since lexical /d/ deletion is consistently lower than past tense /d/ absence, we may conclude that the grammatical process of unmarking is much more prominent than the phonological source. This is not meant to discount the phonological effect completely, but simply to put its potential role in perspective.

Finally, we should mention something about the third phonological shape of the past tense morpheme, the so-called 'long form' /Id/, which is attached to forms ending in an alveolar stop, such as /redId/ 'raided' or /tritId/ 'treated'. Although we do not have many potential cases of long forms in our corpus, we observe that absence of these past tense forms is quite high, with 88 per cent (15 out of 17 potential cases) absent for the 1-3 year LOR group and 61 per cent (25 out of 41) for the 4-7 year LOR group. By contrast, phonological transfer on lexical /Id/ forms (e.g./stupId/ 'stupid', /h ndrId/ 'hundred') is quite infrequent (only 5 out of 43 cases for the 1-3 LOR group revealed deletion). For long forms, it is difficult to argue that convergence from phonological transfer is operating to any extent. We are now ready to compare the three different phonological shapes of the regular past tense form with each other and with the irregular past tense forms. The overall figures of absence are given in Figure 2.5, ignoring for this purpose the constraint of the following phonological context for clusters and /d/ singleton.

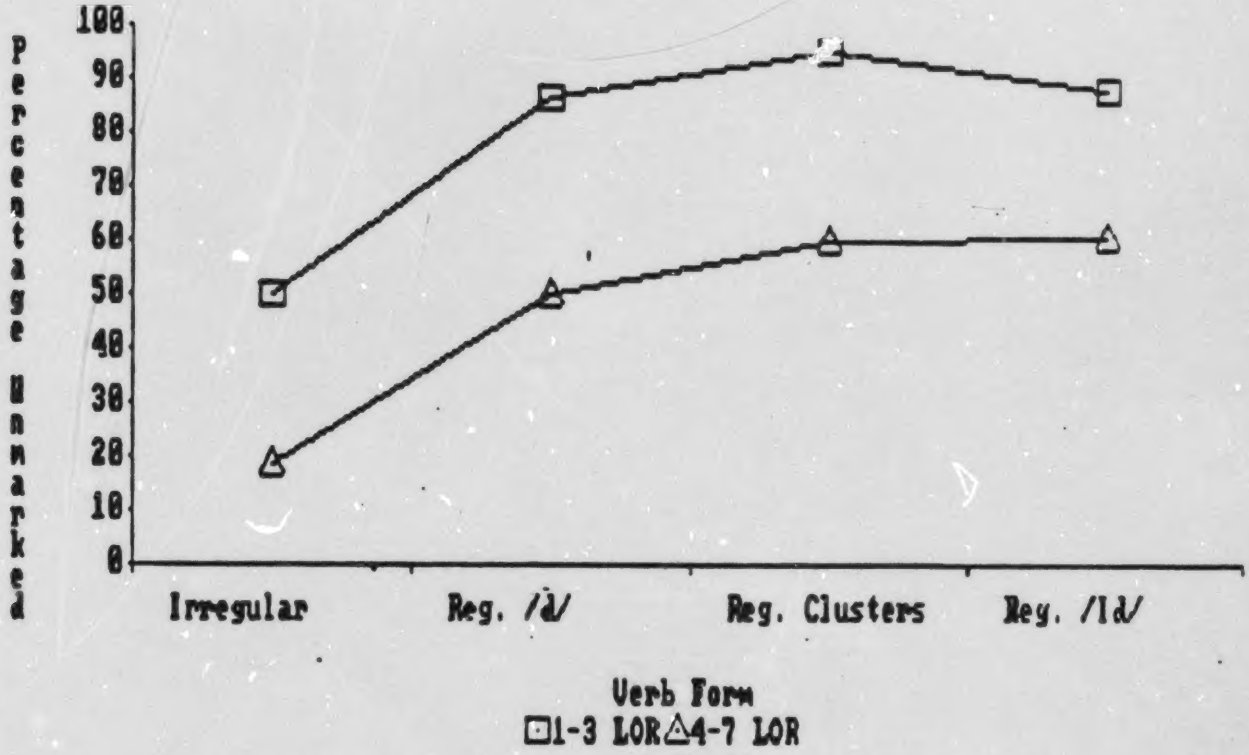


Fig. 2.5 Comparison of Three Phonological Shapes of Regular Past and Irregular Past Tense Unmarking: By Age and LOR

Figure 2.5 supports the conclusion that, regardless of phonological shape, reduction with regular forms occurs more frequently than with irregular forms. The relationship also holds regardless of LOR. This general pattern is, of course, supported in the literature on first and second language acquisition (e.g. Brown 1973:311-312; Schumann 1978: 39), and is probably related to relative roles of rote memorization (with irregular forms) and cognitive pattern acquisition (with regular forms). But there also may be differences in the extent of tense marking within regular forms based on phonological shape. It does not appear to be pure chance that unmarking in past tense forms involving clusters is more frequent than that for /d/ singletons, given the general prominence of the cluster reduction transfer process. The relatively high absence rate for the long forms seems to be vested in the 'natural' ordering of the acquisition of long forms (cf. Berko 1958; Natalicio and Natalicio 1971) after the 'short' forms rather than transfer. The essential point is that we must consider the regular forms in terms of their different phonological shapes and environments. Realistically, it appears that phonological transfer processes and generalized learning strategies related to both phonological and grammatical facts will have a systematic effect on surface tense unmarking.

## Variation in Irregular Verbs

In our examination of the regular past tense forms, we treated the irregular forms as if there were no systematic variation among subclasses of irregular forms. We are now at a point where we must challenge this assumption to see if it is empirically justified (cf. Hakuta 1976: 335). And, if it is not justified, are there effects that systematically constrain variation among different irregular forms?

As a starting point, we can examine irregular verb types by simply looking at the tense marking patterns for five of the most frequently occurring irregular verbs in our corpus. Frequently occurring forms include be (both copula and auxiliary which carry tense), have (both the main verb and auxiliary), do (or the negative don't), come, and go. All of these are high-frequency irregular verbs, although their occurrence in our corpus in some instances may be a function of the type of interview and the topics under discussion. In Table 2.5 we have tabulated the incidence of unmarked past tense for each of these verbs for the 16 subjects in our study.

| AGE | SUBJECT | BE | HAVE | COME | GO | DO |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Unm/Tot | Unm/Tot | Unm/Tot | Unm/Tot | Unm/Tot |
| | | | 1-3 Year LOR | | | |
| 10-12 | 33 | 0/47 | 31/35 | 16/28 | 4/40 | 16/31 |
| | 34 | 1/80 | 20/20 | 19/19 | 15/19 | 2/27 |
| 15-18 | 39 | 24/32 | 37/38 | 6/44 | 1/4 | 9/50 |
| | 47 | 4/18 | 16/18 | 1/12 | -- | 4/15 |
| 20-25 | 27 | 11/21 | 14/16 | 9/12 | 19/24 | 11/36 |
| | 58 | 7/13 | 52/56 | 3/21 | 5/6 | 8/17 |
| 35-55 | 24 | 3/6 | 2/2 | 1/1 | 3/6 | -- |
| | 91 | 7/39 | 19/22 | 1/8 | 0/7 | 0/19 |
| TOTAL | | 57/256 | 191/207 | 56/145 | 47/106 | 50/195 |
| % Unmarked | | 22.3 | 92.3 | 38.6 | 44.3 | 25.6 |
| | | | 4-7 Year LOR | | | |
| 10-12 | 19 | 1/87 | 0/13 | 1/8 | 1/29 | 2/18 |
| | 42 | 0/45 | 1/15 | 0/2 | 1/17 | 3/11 |
| 15-18 | 29 | 2/55 | 10/25 | 0/1 | 1/19 | 0/15 |
| | 50 | 3/6 | 2/4 | 0/1 | 0/13 | 1/7 |
| 20-25 | 77 | 5/36 | 11/14 | 5/13 | 6/14 | 4/14 |
| | 89 | 1/39 | 6/13 | 0/1 | 12/17 | 4/14 |
| 35-55 | 74 | 15/31 | 1/2 | 0/6 | 2/3 | 0/1 |
| | 79 | 0/3 | 4/5 | 0/7 | 0/2 | 0/2 |
| TOTAL | | 27/302 | 35/91 | 6/39 | 23/114 | 14/82 |
| % Unmarked | | 8.9 | 38.5 | 15.4 | 20.2 | 17.1 |

Table 2.5 Unmarked Tense for Five Frequently Occurring Irregular Verbs

Table 2.5 suggests that the assumption of uniformity with respect to irregular verb forms is not justified. At the upper end of the unmarking scale is the form have, and at the lower end is be. The observed difference raises several important questions for the study of variation. One important question is whether these patterns are consistent among different individuals within groups. In other words, do the overall group scores accurately portray an individual speaker's behavior? Another essential question concerns the linguistic patterning of the observed variation. Are the differences between items organizable on some basis beyond particular lexical items, or are they simply lexical constraints?

In order to investigate the question of individual versus group patterning, we can examine several cases of individual variation. This is done in Figures 2.6 and 2.7, where we have charted the distribution of unmarked tense by verb form for one speaker from each of the cells of the sample. Different graphic representations are given for speakers in the 1-3 LOR and 4-7 LOR groups.

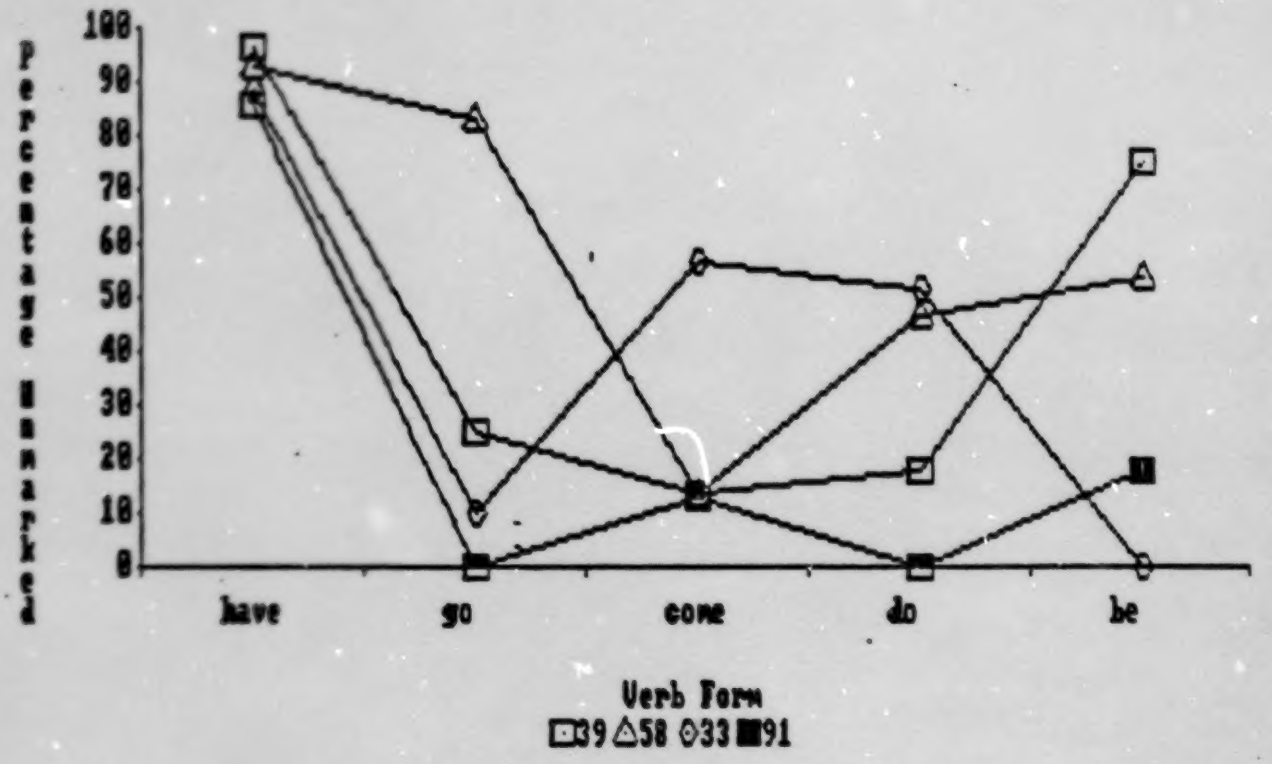


Fig. 2.6 Unmarked Tense for Different Irregular Forms: Select 1-3 LOR Subjects

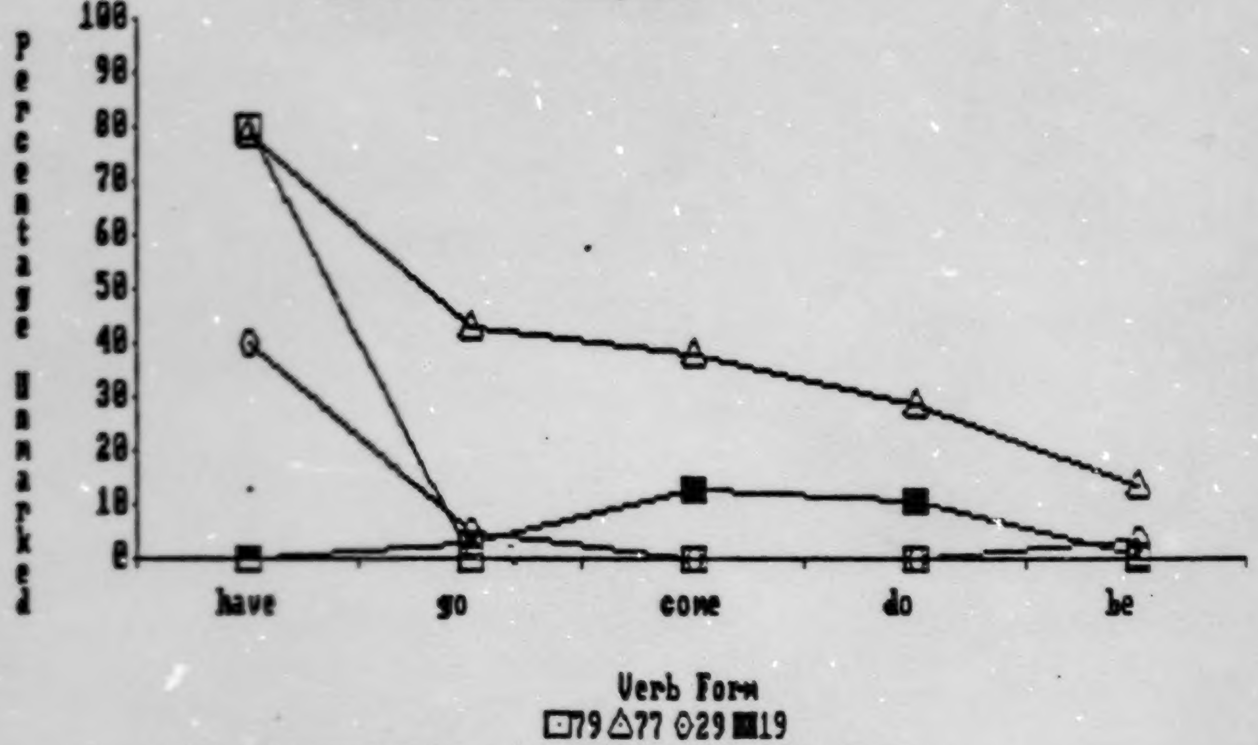


Fig. 2.7 Unmarked Tense for Differnt Irregular Forms: Select 4-7 LOR Subjects

Figures 2.6 and 2.7 show a disparate picture of variation for the five different lexical items represented. There appear to be some consistent patterns across individuals, but also some obvious cases of individual variation. For example, have is consistently the item with the highest incidence of unmarking. At the same time, tense unmarking for be is typically, but not uniformly low. At times, the individual variation seems dramatic, particularly for speakers in the 1-3 LOR group. Thus, Subject 33 has a high frequency of unmarking for come, but low frequency for go, whereas Subject 58 shows the opposite pattern. In the 4-7 LOR group, a leveling of individual differences seems to take place. We conclude that, in the beginning stages of L2 acquisition, the choice of irregular forms for tense marking may be somewhat selective and individualistic, but more consistent patterns are found as the acquisitional process continues.

In looking at the dominant, if not exceptionless, patterns that emerge in the 4-7 LOR period, we may ask if there is a unifying principle that helps explain a pattern in which have unmarking remains consistently high and be low? As it turns out, the five lexical items we have tabulated in Table 2.5 represent four distinct types of irregular tense formation. Although there are certainly a variety of ways in which irregular forms might be classified (e.g. Hoard and Sloat 1973; Quirk and Greenbaum 1973), any reasonable account will recognize at least the following categories of irregular formation: 1) suppletive forms such as is/was and go/went;

2) internal vowel changes, such as *come/came* and *sit/sat*; 3) internal vowel changes plus a regular suffix as in *do/did* or *keep/kept*; 4) final consonant replacement, such as *have/had* or *make/made*. In Table 2.6, the incidence of unmarking for all irregular verb forms in our corpus is given by individual speaker, and Figure 2.8 represents the overall figures for the 1-3 and 4-7 LOR groups.

| AGE | SUBJ | REPLACIVE | | SUFF/VOWEL | | INT. VOWEL | | SUPPLETIVE | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Unm/Tot | % | Unm/Tot | % | Unm/Tot | % | Unm/Tot | % |
| | | | | 1-3 Year LOR | | | | | |
| 10-12 | 33 | 38/42 | 90.5 | 50/88 | 56.8 | 76/107 | 71.0 | 4/87 | 4.6 |
| | 34 | 23/23 | 100.0 | 42/85 | 49.4 | 60/91 | 65.9 | 16/99 | 16.2 |
| 15-18 | 39 | 38/39 | 97.4 | 28/115 | 24.1 | 24/99 | 24.3 | 30/36 | 83.3 |
| | 47 | 17/19 | 89.5 | 14/28 | 50.0 | 6/24 | 25.0 | 4/18 | 22.2 |
| 20-25 | 27 | 20/23 | 87.0 | 26/53 | 49.1 | 40/57 | 70.2 | 30/45 | 66.7 |
| | 58 | 60/64 | 93.8 | 20/56 | 35.7 | 31/72 | 43.1 | 12/19 | 63.2 |
| 35-55 | 24 | 2/2 | 100.0 | 0/3 | 0.0 | 6/6 | 100.0 | 6/12 | 50.0 |
| | 91 | 21/24 | 87.5 | 2/27 | 7.4 | 11/30 | 36.7 | 7/46 | 15.2 |
| TOTAL | | 219/236 | 92.8 | 182/455 | 40.0 | 254/486 | 52.3 | 109/362 | 30.1 |
| | | | | 4-7 Year LOR | | | | | |
| 10-12 | 19 | 1/14 | 7.1 | 5/48 | 10.4 | 6/65 | 9.3 | 2/116 | 1.7 |
| | 42 | 1/16 | 6.3 | 8/41 | 19.5 | 2/12 | 16.7 | 1/62 | 1.6 |
| 15-18 | 29 | 10/27 | 37.0 | 1/24 | 4.2 | 4/31 | 12.9 | 3/74 | 4.1 |
| | 50 | 2/4 | 50.0 | 1/16 | 6.3 | 7/16 | 43.8 | 3/19 | 15.8 |
| 20-25 | 77 | 15/18 | 83.3 | 7/31 | 22.6 | 10/29 | 34.5 | 11/50 | 22.0 |
| | 89 | 10/17 | 58.8 | 4/14 | 28.6 | 7/16 | 43.8 | 13/56 | 23.2 |
| 35-55 | 74 | 4/5 | 80.0 | 2/7 | 28.6 | 9/32 | 28.1 | 17/34 | 50.0 |
| | 79 | 5/6 | 83.3 | 0/7 | 0.0 | 3/14 | 21.4 | 0/5 | 0.0 |
| TOTAL | | 48/107 | 44.9 | 28/188 | 14.9 | 48/215 | 22.3 | 50/416 | 12.0 |

Table 2.6 Unmarked Tense for Four Types of Irregular Verbs

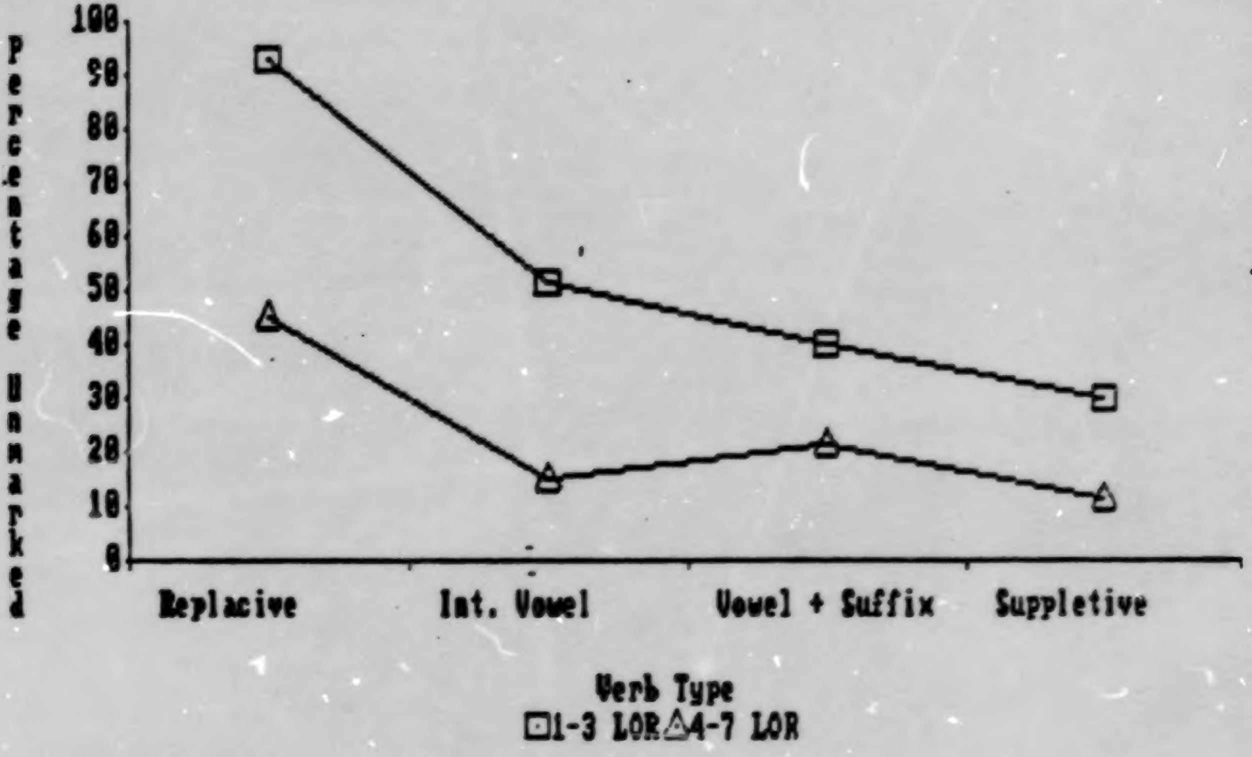


Figure 2.8 Unmarked Tense for Four Irregular Verb Types:
By LOR

On the basis of Table 2.6 and Figure 2.8, we can conclude that irregular verb type is a constraint on the incidence of unmarked tense. Although we must allow for some individual variation, given the lexical selectivity found in the 1-3 year LOR group, we apparently have isolated a constraint in which unmarking for replacive forms is greater than internal vowel change, which, in turn, is greater than internal vowel change plus suffix, which, in turn, is greater than suppletive forms. This hierarchy appears to correlate with a principle of phonetic distance in the past irregular formation, with final replacive consonants the least and suppletive forms the most distant. This 'principle of saliency' may be stated as follows: the more distant phonetically the past tense irregular form is from the non-past, the more likely it will be marked for tense. We caution that there is some individual deviation from this ordering, particularly in the earlier stages of acquisition, where selectivity in the rote learning of irregular forms is highlighted, but the principle captures an apparent tendency which exerts more pressure as the acquisitional process proceeds.

One additional tabulation has been undertaken related to tense marking and irregular verb forms, this one related to verb frequency. It is recalled here that the verb forms chosen for our original tabulation were high frequency items in the corpus. Because they are high frequency items, we want to see if they are typical of the verb classes they represent. Thus, we have undertaken a tabulation in which we separate from other items in the class the particular lexical items chosen for replacives, internal vowel change, and vowel plus suffix change. We have not done this for suppletives, since go and be are, for all practical purposes, the only items in the class. Overall figures are given for each of these verb subclasses in Table 2.7.

| | REPLACIVE | | INT.VOWEL | | SUFF/VOWEL | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Unm/Tot | % Unm | Unm/Tot | % Unm | Unm/Tot | % Unm |
| | | | 1-3 Year LOR | | | |
| Frequent | 191/207 | 92.3 | 56/145 | 38.6 | 50/195 | 25.6 |
| Other | 28/29 | 96.6 | 198/341 | 58.1 | 132/260 | 50.8 |
| | | | 4-7 Year LOR | | | |
| Frequent | 35/91 | 38.5 | 6/39 | 15.4 | 14/82 | 17.1 |
| Other | 13/16 | 81.3 | 42/176 | 23.9 | 14/106 | 13.2 |

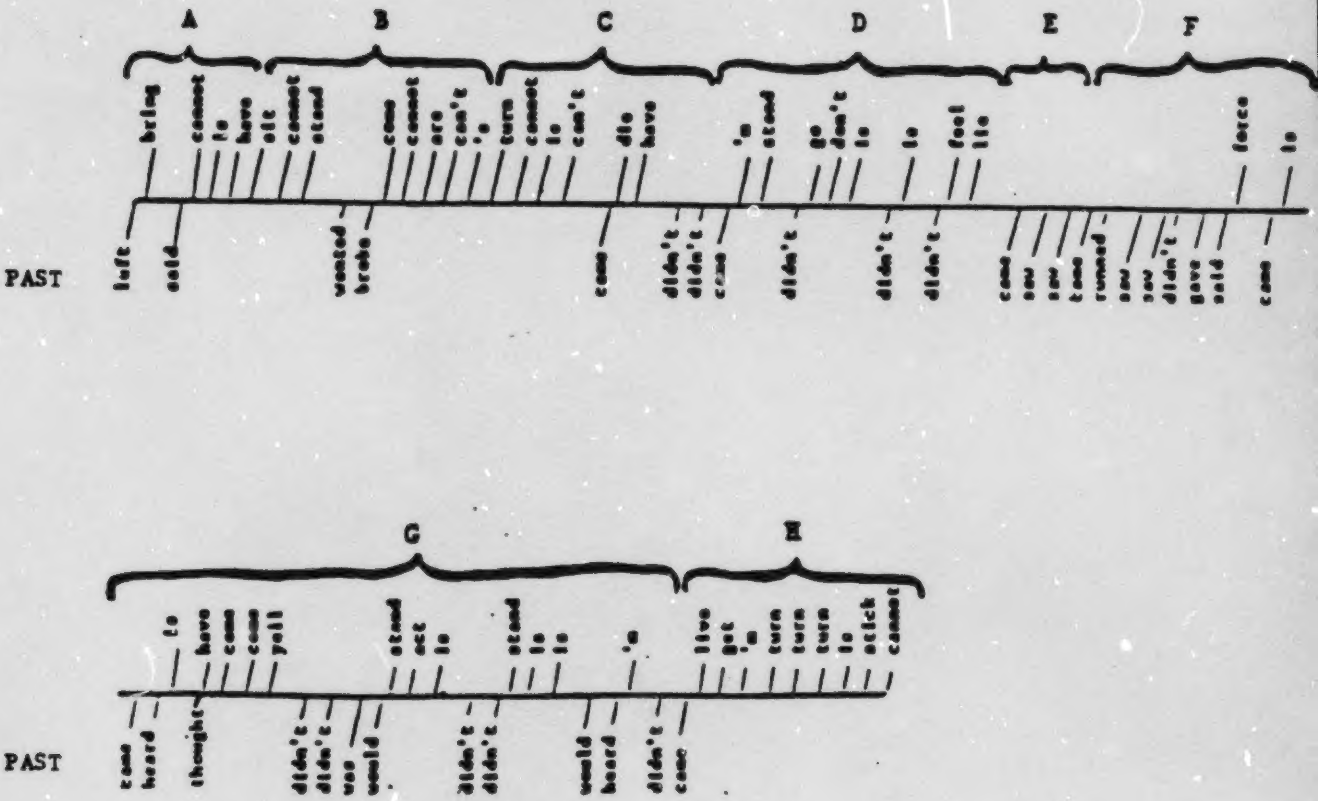
Table 2.7 Incidence of Unmarked Tense for Frequent versus Other Irregular Verbs

With one exception (do versus other internal change plus suffix verbs for the 4-7 year group), the data support an hypothesis that frequently occurring irregular verb forms will be marked for tense more often than their infrequent counterparts. We are not certain at this point as to how strong the frequency constraint is in relation to other constraints, but it is apparent that it cannot be ignored.

## Tense Marking and Higher Level Constraints

In the previous sections, we have shown that there are a number of constraints on the variability of tense marking, including whether the form is regular or irregular, the shape of the regular form, its phonological context, the shape of the irregular past formation, and even the relative frequency of the irregular form. We are now ready to consider the possibibility of higher level constraints on tense unmarking as suggested in recent studies (e.g.Godfrey 1980; Wolfson 1982). For our discussion here, we shall just take a sample case of one of our speakers, since our goal is to show that surface constraints cannot be ignored in the consideration of higher level constraints rather than to focus on the analysis of these higher level constraints per se.

In Figure 2.9, we indicate the continuity of tense marking for a narrative produced by Subject 39, one of the primary speakers considered in the previous tabulations of tense unmarking. Our previous tabulations did not organize potential cases on the basis of discourse. In this tabulation, we show the sequencing of tenses throughout the narrative. This will give us an idea of sequencing and continuity in tense marking and unmarking within the narrative. In addition, we have broken the narrative down on the basis of different episodes, identified as A through H. We attempted to follow the somewhat loose criteria specified for such divisions (Wolfson 1982). This will give us an indication of how tense marking patterns might correlate with episode boundaries. Following the distribution of tense sequencing within the narrative, we give a tabulation of tense marking based on some of the major constraints we have isolated, including the distinction between regular and irregular and the different types of irregular forms.



Tabulations of Particular Surface Forms

| | Unm/Tot | % Unm |
|---|---|---|
| Regular | 9/11 | 81.3 |
| Irregular | 40/73 | 54.8 |
| Irregular Forms | | |
| have | 3/3 | 100.0 |
| come | 3/10 | 30.0 |
| do/don't | 1/12 | 8.3 |
| be | 15/16 | 93.8 |
| go | 1/1 | 100.0 |

Fig. 2.9 Distribution of Different Surface Forms in a Narrative

Our first glance at the distribution of tense in the narrative suggests that there may be some serializing of the tense marking. Furthermore, several of the shifts in the series do occur at or close to episode boundaries. However, when we look at the tabulations for the different verb forms, we find relationships that are difficult to ignore. The difference between regular and irregular is very prominent, as are some of the lexical choices. Thus, the speaker has practically all cases of don't marked for past tense while leaving be unmarked, with a similar contrast for come and have. In examining the placement of these forms in the narrative, it is difficult see them merely as a function of episodic or continuity shifts. In fact, the cases of didn't are found predominantly in contexts where the surrounding forms are unmarked for tense. It thus appears that in this instance, the distribution of tense marking in the discourse is more constrained by the surface considerations than factors of discourse. While this is only one instance, the impressive regularity and replicability of the surface constraints throughout the corpus suggest that this narrative is more than an illustrative, hand-picked case. In Chapters Four and Five we shall examine higher level constraints in more detail to determine if this finding is characteristic of other speakers or idiosyntractic. At this point, it appears that the surface constraints are the essential factor accounting for variability in this L2 acquisition context.

## Conclusion

The preceding discussion has demonstrated that tense marking can be a highly variable phenomenon and that there are a number of surface constraints that may systematically affect this variability. In addition to the generally acknowledged variable of regular versus irregular forms, there are constraints related to the phonological form of regular or irregular, the phonological context, and the frequency of the verb form. Furthermore, there is a lexical dimension that has to be recognized at some stages of acquisition. The overall picture of systematic variability that is suggested is fairly complex, although the constraints in most cases are fairly obvious, natural ones that have been substantiated in other variation studies (Labov 1969: Wolfram and Fasold 1974; Guy 1980).

While the concern with surface level constraints suggests obvious cautions for the study of tense marking on a discourse level, it should not be taken as a rejection of the consideration of deeper or higher level organization in interlanguage tense marking. In fact, another study (Wolfram 1984) showed that unmarked tense could be fossilized in L2 acquisition as an aspectual marker found in certain kinds of discourses, and there is reason to believe that some of the discourse constraints suggested by Godfrey (1980) and Kumpf (1984) are reasonable hypotheses. But the focus on higher level considerations cannot afford to ignore the obvious surface contraints and, at least, control for them in the examination of discourse. Indeed, we expect the unraveling picture of tense marking in interlanguage to involve an array of factors ranging from the lower to the higher levels of linguistic organization, and we shall examine some of these in subsequent chapters. The analysis of low-level constraints hardly seems like an unreasonable starting point for the systematic study of variability in tense marking, and a more extensive study of higher level linguistic organization will have to reconcile itself to the kinds of systematic contraints uncovered here before proceeding to higher levels.

# CHAPTER THREE

## TENSE MARKING VARIABILITY IN SPOKEN LANGUAGE

### Introduction

In this chapter we analyze tense marking in the spoken English data gathered in the Vietnamese community in Northern Virginia. The constraints considered are regular versus irregular verbs, the three types of regular verbs (formed by a /t/, /d/, or /Id/ suffix), five frequently occurring irregular verbs, and the various forms of irregular verbs. The tabulations used in the analysis extend those completed in our preliminary study (Christian, Wolfram and Hatfield 1983), in which the spoken data for sixteen subjects was examined for patterns of tense marking. In this study tabulations for sixteen additional subjects have been undertaken. The 32 subjects are evenly distributed throughout our four age levels (10-12; 15-18; 20-26; and 35-55), and are divided equally between the two levels of length of residency (LOR) in the United States (1-3 and 4-7 years) and both sexes. The distribution is as follows:

| Age Group | 1-3 Years LOR | | | 4-7 Years LOR | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | S# | Age | Sex | S# | Age | Sex |
| 10-12 | 11 | 10 | M | 19 | 11 | M |
| | 16 | 12 | M | 92 | 10 | M |
| | 33 | 12 | F | 42 | 11 | F |
| | 34 | 10 | F | 57 | 12 | F |
| 15-18 | 37 | 17 | M | 29 | 15 | M |
| | 84 | 16 | M | 43 | 16 | M |
| | 39 | 15 | F | 50 | 15 | F |
| | 47 | 17 | F | 51 | 16 | F |
| 20-26 | 27 | 20 | M | 77 | 24 | M |
| | 58 | 24 | M | 89 | 23 | M |
| | 83 | 25 | F | 65 | 22 | F |
| | 87 | 26 | F | 76 | 20 | F |
| 35-55 | 24 | 45 | M | 74 | 39 | M |
| | 73 | 37 | M | 79 | 50(?) | M |
| | 91 | 36 | F | 32 | 37 | F |
| | 93 | 40 | F | 78 | 33 | F |

Table 3.1. Sample

For each of these subjects a typescript of the taped interview was prepared. However, the typescript itself was not intended to be used as primary data, but as an aid to analysis. In order to analyze each of the tapes for tense marking, we listened to each tape using the typescript simply as a reference guide in our extraction. For each instance of a verb which was judged to require past tense marking in a mainstream dialect of English, a notation was made on the typescript and then the verb was scored for the absence (0) or presence (1) of tense marking. These scores were later tabulated on data sheets in preparation for quantitative analysis. Occurrences which were indeterminate were not included in the tabulations. Two types of indeterminancy occurred: (1) whether or not the verb was a potential case for tense marking, and (2) whether or not a verb was actually marked for past tense. At times it was impossible to determine whether or not a verb was a potential case for tense marking because of factors such as the absence of adverbial co-occurrence or the inability to determine whether or not the topic being described was habitual or in the past. Indeterminancy as to whether or not a form was marked for past tense resulted from such factors as background noise on the tape, overlapping speech, difficulty in hearing the speaker, or phonological contexts (e.g. homorganic contexts such as "walke_d_ _d_own").

Half of the tapes were analyzed by Wolfram and half by Hatfield. Because our individual analyses were to be combined for the study, we performed inter-rater reliability studies on two tapes in order (1) to determine whether or not both investigators agreed as to which verbs would require past tense marking in mainstream dialects of English, and (2) to establish whether or not the forms agreed upon as requiring past tense marking were transcribed as marked or unmarked. The two subjects for which inter-rater reliability studies were done were a 10-year old male who had been in the United States seven years at the time of the interview (Subject # 92), and a 17-year old male who had been in the United States two years at the time of the interview (Subject # 37). The following table shows the results of the reliability studies:

| | Subject # 92 | Subject # 37 |
|---|---|---|
| No. of occurrences both W. & H. scored as either marked or unmarked | 167 | 194 |
| No. with same score | 160 | 189 |
| No. with different score | 7 | 5 |
| % of agreement | 95.8 | 97.4 |
| No. W. scored H. did not score | 13 | 53 |
| No. H. scored W. did not score | 7 | 40 |

Table 3.2. Results of Inter-rater Reliability Studies

As is shown in Table 3.2, for both subjects there was a high number of occurrences (167 and 194 respectively) which both investigators judged should have been marked for past tense by the speaker and which both designated as either marked or unmarked for tense. Out of these occurrences, there was a high level of agreement for both subjects as to whether or not these verbs were marked for tense (95.8% - Subject # 92; 97.4% - Subject # 37). There were very few examples of verbs in this category for which the investigators disagreed about marking (7 - Subject # 92; 5 - Subject # 37). It should be noted that the tape of Subject # 92 was one of the most difficult in the sample to analyze due to the poor quality of the tape (background noise), as well as the low English language proficiency level of the speaker. We considered a high agreement level for this tape, in particular, to be a good indication that our individual judgments were reliable.

There were some verbs which one of the investigators scored as marked or unmarked for tense, but the other did not (see Table 3.2 above). Some of these verbs involved forms which both investigators judged to require past tense marking, but chose not to score for listener perception reasons (e.g. phonological context or difficulty in hearing the speaker). Other verb occurrences in this category were not scored because they were judged to be indeterminate as to whether or not they should be past tense forms because of unclear time reference, lack of adverbial co-occurrence, and other reasons related to tense marking flexibility in mainstream English.

In addition to performing the overall inter-rater reliablility studies, we tabulated the percentages of tense marking for irregular and regular verbs by the two investigators, as shown in Table 3.3. This table includes all verbs designated to require tense marking in the mainstream varieties of English, including modals which were tabulated separately in the analysis described below.

| | Subject # 92 | | | | Subject # 37 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Wolfram | | Hatfield | | Wolfram | | Hatfield | |
| | Unm/T | % | Unm/T | % | Unm/T | % | Unm/T | % |
| Irregular Verbs | 14/140 | 10.0 | 9/141 | 6.4 | 139/193 | 72.0 | 125/182 | 68.7 |
| Regular Verbs | 30/40 | 75.0 | 22/38 | 57.9 | 54/57 | 94.7 | 50/54 | 92.6 |

Table 3.3. Incidence of Unmarked Tense for Subjects in Reliability Studies, by Rater

With one exception, there was fairly high agreement on the overall figures for marking. The one discrepancy was in the category of regular verbs for Subject # 92 (75.0% versus 57.9). The percentages in the other categories were all within several points of one another.

These inter-rater reliability studies indicate that our individual judgments as to whether or not a form should be marked for past tense, and whether or not it was marked for past by the speaker were highly similar. Therefore, we decided that it was acceptable to combine our analyses of 16 speakers each for the present study, in order to have a sample totaling 32 speakers.

## Phonological and Grammatical Processes Influencing Tense Marking

In our preliminary investigation we discussed a number of surface constraints on tense marking. These constraints are further investigated in this chapter, using additional data.

There are both grammatical and phonological processes, or a combination of both, which may result in surface tense unmarking. In some cases, an L2 speaker of English may use a present tense verb form in a context in which a past tense form is required in the target language as a matter of grammatical selection. Although it is often assumed that the grammatical selection process simply results in varying degrees of conformity to the target norm, we cannot preclude the possibility of systematic interlanguage restructuring.

Wolfram (1984b) provides one example of how a grammatical rule in a L2 speaker's English may be restructured. It was shown that some speakers of Indian English use unmarked tense as an aspectual marker to denote habitual activity.

Other grammatical processes apart from simple grammatical selection may result in surface forms not marked overtly for past tense. One type of grammatical process which may influence tense marking in Vietnamese English is the acquisition of certain nonstandard English verb forms by these L2 speakers. There are some verbs in nonstandard dialects of English for which the past and present tense forms are not differentiated. Some examples are come, hear, say, run, give, eat (Wolfram and Fasold 1974:151; Wolfram and Christian 1976:84).

The use of these verb forms in past tense contexts is considered to result from an extension of the standard English verb subclass which uses the same form for past and present tense (e.g. put, cut). Although many of the speakers in our sample are in environments (in school and neighborhood settings) in which non-mainstream dialects of English coexist, it is unlikely that they will incorporate features of these dialects into their L2 because the Vietnamese appear to use their teachers as their language models rather than their peers (cf. Christian et al 1983). This may be a result of a Vietnamese cultural value which places teachers above even parents among those who deserve respect. It seems that most Vietnamese refugees are highly motivated toward success in school and the job market (Christian et al 1983:49-51), and therefore would most likely follow teachers' admonitions to avoid certain socially stigmatized language features. For example, in our previous study it was reported that ain't never occurred in the corpus of the tapes which was examined for grammatical features, even though it is a widely used feature in nonstandard speech.

Another grammatical process which may influence tense marking is the use of historical present tense in narratives. The term "historical present tense" refers to present tense forms of verbs which are used by native speakers of English in relating past time narratives. This feature will be discussed more fully in Chapter Four where we investigate its possible use in spoken narratives. To briefly summarize the possible influence of this feature, Wolfson (1978, 1979) has shown that native speakers of English alternate in a structured way between the use of past tense and present tense (conversational historical present) forms in spoken narratives. She has suggested that this pattern has to be considered when analyzing narratives of non-native English speakers (Wolfson 1982), because unmarked past tense forms may actually be historical present tense forms.

In addition to grammatical bases for surface unmarking, there are phonological bases as well. Regular verbs in English are marked for past tense by the addition of one of the three forms of the past tense suffix. The resulting forms may be influenced by phonological processes which will lead to surface tense unmarking. The three forms of the past tense suffix are: /d/ following any voiced segment other than an alveolar stop (e.g. /lIvd/ 'lived', /stʌdid/ 'studied'); /t/ following any voiceless segment other than an alveolar stop (e.g. /lUkt/ 'looked', /fInIšt/ 'finished'); and /Id/ following an alveolar stop (e.g. /tritId/ 'treated', /nidId/ 'needed'). General phonological processes may operate on these regular past tense forms to delete the final consonant (/d/ or /t/) or the final syllable (/Id/). Therefore, even when a speaker has applied a grammatical rule to mark a form for past, a phonological process may remove the surface tense marking.

All three of the regular phonological forms may be influenced by phonological patterns which are present in the source language, Vietnamese. In some cases, the addition of a /t/ or /d/ results in a consonant cluster (/ričt/ 'reached', /stEpt/ 'stepped', and /lIvd/ 'lived'). Even when a speaker has grammatically marked a form for past tense, the surface form may be unmarked because of a consonant cluster reduction process. This may apply more to native Vietnamese speakers who are acquiring English than to some other L2 acquisition situations because Vietnamese does not have word-final consonant clusters. Therefore, phonological transfer may result in consonant cluster reduction.

Another regular past tense form in English ends in /d/ singleton. The only final consonants used in Vietnamese are /p/, /t/, /k/ and nasal segments. Therefore, if the source language pattern is transferred to the target language, these speakers may pronounce 'played' as /ple/ or 'carried' as /kæri/. However, because Vietnamese does have a final /t/ these forms may occur as /plet/ for 'played', or /kærit/ for 'carried'.

The final form of regular past tense marking in English potentially affected by phonological processes from the source language is the /Id/ past tense form. Vietnamese words are generally monosyllabic, so Vietnamese English speakers may tend to delete the unstressed final syllable in these forms as a type of apocope.

These three phonological forms of regular past, those with final consonant clusters, final /d/ singleton or final /Id/, are, of course, subject to both grammatical and phonological processes, which, if applied, result in the same surface form. That is, the surface form of a regular verb which is not marked grammatically for past tense is the same as the surface form of a regular verb which has been grammatically marked for past, but has undergone phonological processes resulting in final consonant cluster simplification, final /d/ deletion, or final /Id/ deletion. These can be represented as follows for different verb forms:

| | Base form | | Grammatical process | | Phonological process | | Result |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| reach | /rič/ | → | not applied | → | ------- | → | /rič/ |
| | /rič/ | → | /ričt/ | → | Cluster reduction<br>/čt/ → /č/ ______ ## | → | /rič/ |
| play | /ple/ | → | not applied | → | ------- | → | /ple/ |
| | /ple/ | → | /pled/ | → | Final /d/ deletion<br>/d/ → 0/ ______ ## | → | /ple/ |
| treat | /trit/ | → | not applied | → | ------- | → | /trit/ |
| | /trit/ | → | /tritId/ | → | Final /Id/ deletion<br>/Id/ → 0/ ______ ## | → | /trit/ |

Because grammatical and phonological processes may converge to produce the same surface form it is not possible to discern in the examination of an individual unmarked tense form which process has produced it. However, by examining various phonological patterns within the data we can determine the overall effect of phonological versus grammatical processes.

In addition to the various past tense forms of the regular verbs, the convergence of grammatical and phonological processes may also affect some types of irregular verbs. There is one class of irregular verbs for which past tense is formed by alternation between a voiced alveolar (base form) and a voiceless alveolar (past tense form) as the final element in a consonant cluster. Examples of this form are spend/spent, and build/built. If the forms /spEn/ and /bIl/ appear in the spoken data it is unclear whether or not they are a result of grammatical or phonological processes. Also, because /t/ occurs word-finally in Vietnamese, but not /d/, the forms /spEnt/ and /bIlt/ may be judged to be past tense forms, but may actually be a result of devoicing of the final /d/ on /spEnd/ and /bIld/.

## Variation in Tense Marking

In addition to the phonological and grammatical processes which have just been outlined, there are sociolinguistic factors which may affect tense marking behavior. The categories of age, sex and length of residency (LOR) are possible social variables. As discussed above, our subjects fall into four levels according to age group, two levels of LOR, and are equally represented among those groups by both sexes.

This study uses 'variation theory' (Labov 1969; Bailey 1973; Cedergren and Sankoff 1974; Sankoff 1978) as the basis for examining structured variability. This is a quantitative approach to data which, as it is applied in this case, examines all instances of verb forms which should be marked for past tense in mainstream English and categorizes these surface forms as marked or unmarked. Tabulations are then made and an analysis is performed examining the patterns of fluctuation to determine the various sociolinguistic factors that may be contributing to the systematic variability of tense marking. Patterns of tense marking are believed to be a result of both social and linguistic factors. In the rest of this chapter we discuss the patterns of variation in tense marking which we have found to occur in the speech of our 32 subjects, and compare these findings to those which were discussed in our preliminary investigation (Christian et al 1983) and in Wolfram (1984).

### Regular and Irregular Verbs

Regular and irregular verbs are distinguished by the manner in which past tense formation is made. For regular verbs, one of the three productive forms of the past tense suffix is added (/d/, /t/ or /Id/). The past tense forms of irregular verbs result from several different processes which will be discussed more thoroughly below. Briefly, they are: suppletion (e.g. is vs. was); replacive final consonant (make vs. made); internal vowel change (come vs. came); and internal vowel change plus the addition of a past suffix (say vs. said). L2 acquirers of English apparently use different strategies to learn the past tense forms of regular and irregular verbs. The past tense forms of irregular verbs differ in various ways from the non-past forms, which may be viewed on a continuum of phonetic distance. Suppletives are the least similar, while those formed by a change in internal vowel are the most similar. For regular verbs the process of past tense marking is productive; for irregulars it is not. The acquisition of the past tense form of irregular verbs, therefore, is more subject to acquisition by rote memorization, whereas the acquisition of past tense forms of regular verbs is a process in which rules can be learned and applied automatically. Once the pattern is acquired it can be applied to any of the regular verbs. Rote memorization naturally plays an initial role in that it is necessary for L2 learners to know which verbs are regular and which are past, and they may learn to categorize them by the use of rote memorization. There are cases in which our subjects had categorized verbs incorrectly. Later in this chapter we discuss occurrences of rule regularization, in which the past tense suffix is appended to irregular forms.

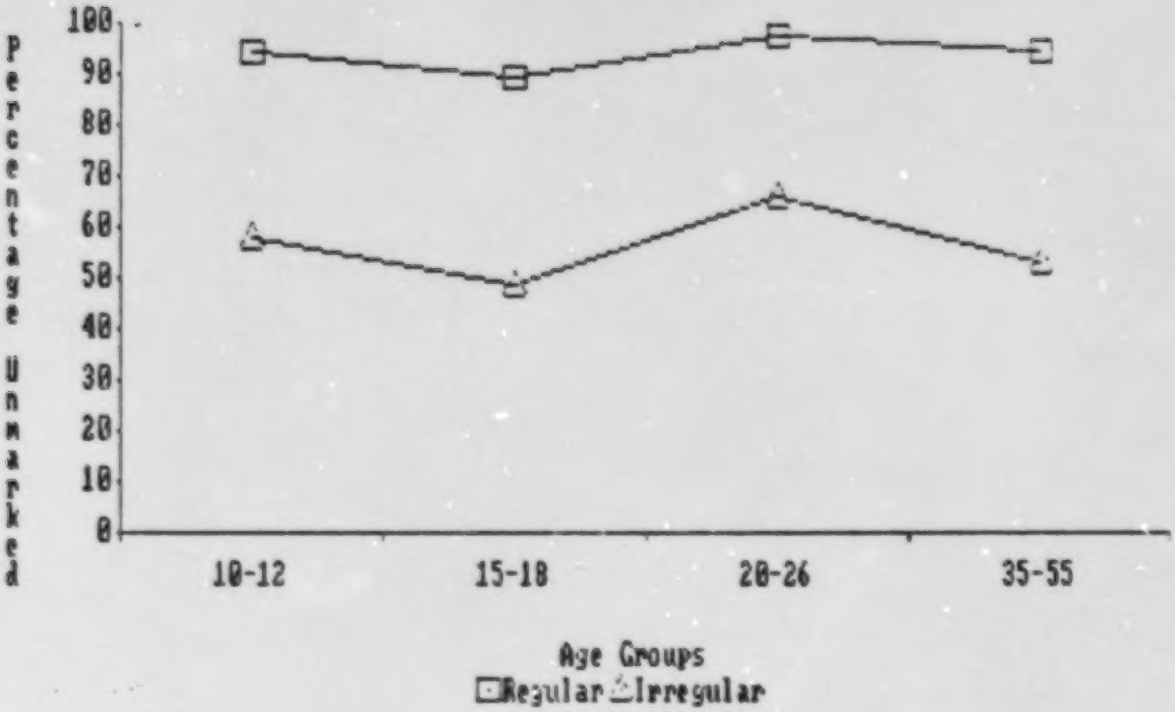
Table 3.4 displays our findings for tense unmarking for all 32 subjects, by regular and irregular verbs. In this table, as in many of the ones following, the tabulations are presented by number of occurrences of unmarked tense per number of environments in which it should have occurred, with percentages of unmarked tense for each subject, and the mean of the subjects' percentages per cell as organized by age level and LOR. In this table the mean percentage for subjects is also presented by sex.

The examination of Table 3.4 shows that for each age group, there is a higher percentage of unmarked tense for regular verbs than for irregular verbs. This is true for group scores as divided by age levels and LOR, as well as for each of the 32 subjects when examining their individual patterns of tense marking. Even those subjects in the 4-7 year LOR group, and who are in the 10-12 and the 15-18 year age levels, show higher percentages of unmarked tense for regular verbs (49.6% and 76.3%, respectively) as compared to their group scores for the irregular verbs (6.5% and 17.6%). These particular subjects arrived in the United States between the ages of three and ten, when, according to child language acquisition theories, L2 learning occurs much more naturally than at later ages (Hale and Budar 1970; Rosansky 1975; Schumann 1975). Yet they still show high percentages of unmarked tense on regular verbs.

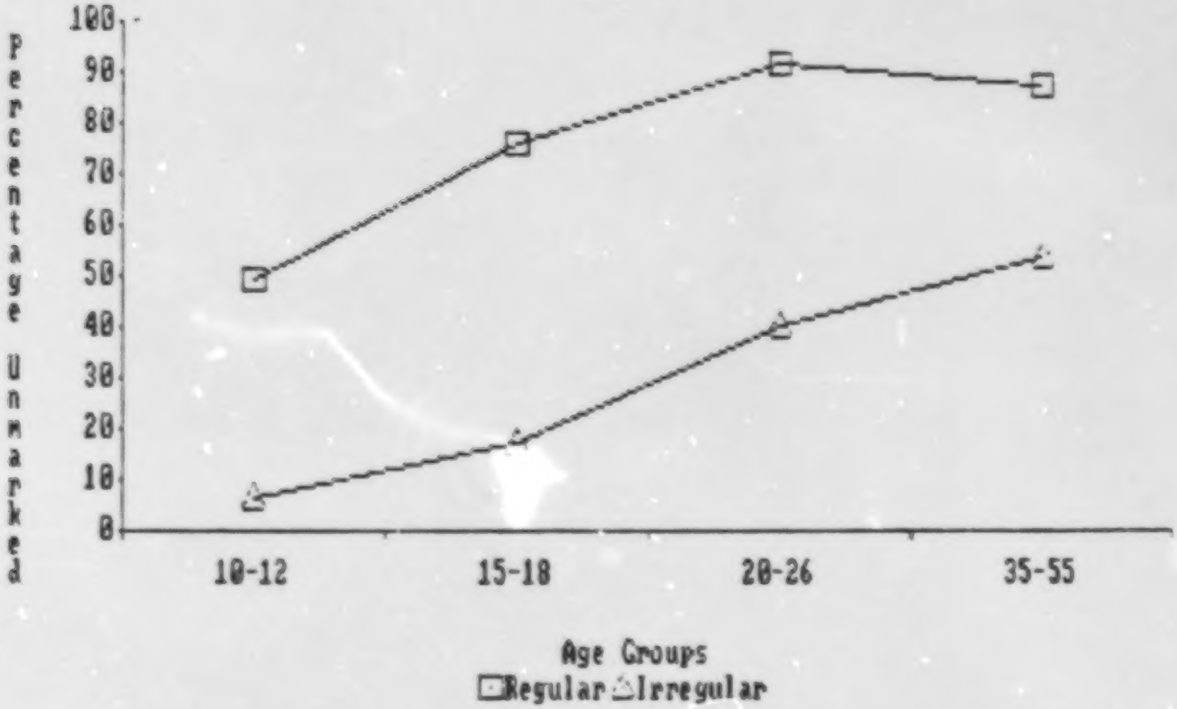
The group percentages found in Table 3.4 are presented graphically in Figure 3.1. For the 1-3 LOR group, the four age levels show approximately the same levels of unmarked tense for both the regular and irregular verbs, from 48.9 percent to 65.9 percent (a 17 point range) for the irregular verbs, and from 89.6 percent to 97.6 percent for the regular verbs. For the 4-7 LOR group,

| | | | Residency | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | 1-3 Years | | | | | | | | | 4-7 Years | | | | | | | |
| | | | IRREGULAR | | | | REGULAR | | | | | IRREGULAR | | | | REGULAR | | | |
| Age | Sex | Subj | No. Um/T | % Um | $\overline{M}$ by Sex | $\overline{M}$ | No. Um/T | % Um | $\overline{M}$ by Sex | $\overline{M}$ | Subj | No. Um/T | % Um | $\overline{M}$ by Sex | $\overline{M}$ | No. Um/T | % Um | $\overline{M}$ by Sex | $\overline{M}$ |
| 10-12 | M | 11 | 96/127 | 75.6 | 67.3 | 58.4 | 27/27 | 100.0 | 96.3 | 94.5 | 19 | 14/243 | 5.8 | 5.5 | 6.5 | 25/58 | 43.1 | 50.5 | 49.6 |
| | | 16 | 175/297 | 58.9 | | | 37/40 | 92.5 | | | 92 | 7/137 | 5.1 | | | 22/38 | 57.9 | | |
| | F | 33 | 168/324 | 51.9 | 49.6 | | 59/63 | 93.7 | 92.8 | | 42 | 12/131 | 9.2 | 7.5 | | 6/23 | 26.1 | 48.8 | |
| | | 34 | 141/298 | 47.3 | | | 56/61 | 91.8 | | | 57 | 5/88 | 5.7 | | | 10/14 | 71.4 | | |
| 15-18 | M | 37 | 117/174 | 67.2 | 54.0 | 48.9 | 50/55 | 90.9 | 93.2 | 89.6 | 29 | 18/156 | 11.5 | 11.2 | 17.6 | 21/26 | 80.8 | 69.6 | 76.3 |
| | | 84 | 112/275 | 40.7 | | | 62/65 | 95.4 | | | 43 | 23/211 | 10.9 | | | 21/36 | 58.3 | | |
| | F | 39 | 120/290 | 41.4 | 43.8 | | 76/80 | 95.0 | 86.0 | | 50 | 13/55 | 23.6 | 24.1 | | 17/24 | 70.8 | 83.1 | |
| | | 47 | 41/89 | 46.1 | | | 10/13 | 76.9 | | | 51 | 39/159 | 24.5 | | | 41/43 | 95.3 | | |
| 20-26 | M | 27 | 116/178 | 65.2 | 61.8 | 65.9 | 49/51 | 96.1 | 96.6 | 97.6 | 77 | 43/128 | 33.6 | 33.3 | 40.4 | 37/42 | 88.1 | 92.2 | 92.1 |
| | | 58 | 123/211 | 58.3 | | | 97/100 | 97.0 | | | 89 | 34/103 | 33.0 | | | 26/27 | 96.3 | | |
| | F | 83 | 86/150 | 57.3 | 70.0 | | 57/58 | 98.3 | 98.6 | | 65 | 26/50 | 52.0 | 47.5 | | 16/18 | 88.9 | 92.0 | |
| | | 87 | 100/121 | 82.6 | | | 88/89 | 98.9 | | | 76 | 82/191 | 42.9 | | | 39/41 | 95.1 | | |
| 35-55 | M | 24 | 16/23 | 69.6 | 65.2 | 53.2 | 10/10 | 100.0 | 98.6 | 94.9 | 74 | 32/78 | 41.0 | 33.0 | 54.0 | 22/24 | 91.7 | 77.7 | 87.3 |
| | | 73 | 17/28 | 60.7 | | | 35/36 | 97.2 | | | 79 | 8/32 | 25.0 | | | 7/11 | 63.6 | | |
| | F | 91 | 48/127 | 37.8 | 41.2 | | 35/36 | 97.2 | 91.3 | | 32 | 88/113 | 77.9 | 74.9 | | 75/79 | 94.9 | 96.9 | |
| | | 93 | 25/26 | 44.6 | | | 29/34 | 85.3 | | | 78 | 146/203 | 71.9 | | | 79/80 | 98.8 | | |
| Total | | | 1501/2768 | 54.2 | | | 777/818 | 95.0 | | | | 590/2078 | 28.4 | | | 464/584 | 79.5 | | |

Table 3.4. Incidence of Unmarked Past Tense for Irregular and Regular Verb Forms



1-3 LOR



4-7 LOR

Figure 3.1. Incidence of Unmarked Tense for Regular and Irregular Verb Forms, by Age and Length of Residency

however, there appear to be more distinctions in the incidence of tense unmarking between the age groups. The range is from 6.5 percent to 54.0 percent for irregular verbs, and 49.6 percent to 92.1 percent for regular verbs. Generally, the younger the age level the smaller the incidence of unmarked tense.

In Figure 3.2 the incidence of tense unmarking is displayed on the basis of age level, LOR, and sex. Although the differences are for the most part small, and there are only two subjects per cell in this case, the females show slightly less unmarked tense than the males in the 1-3 LOR group, but the opposite tendency occurs in the 4-7 LOR group. The mean of the group percentages by sex and LOR is as follows:

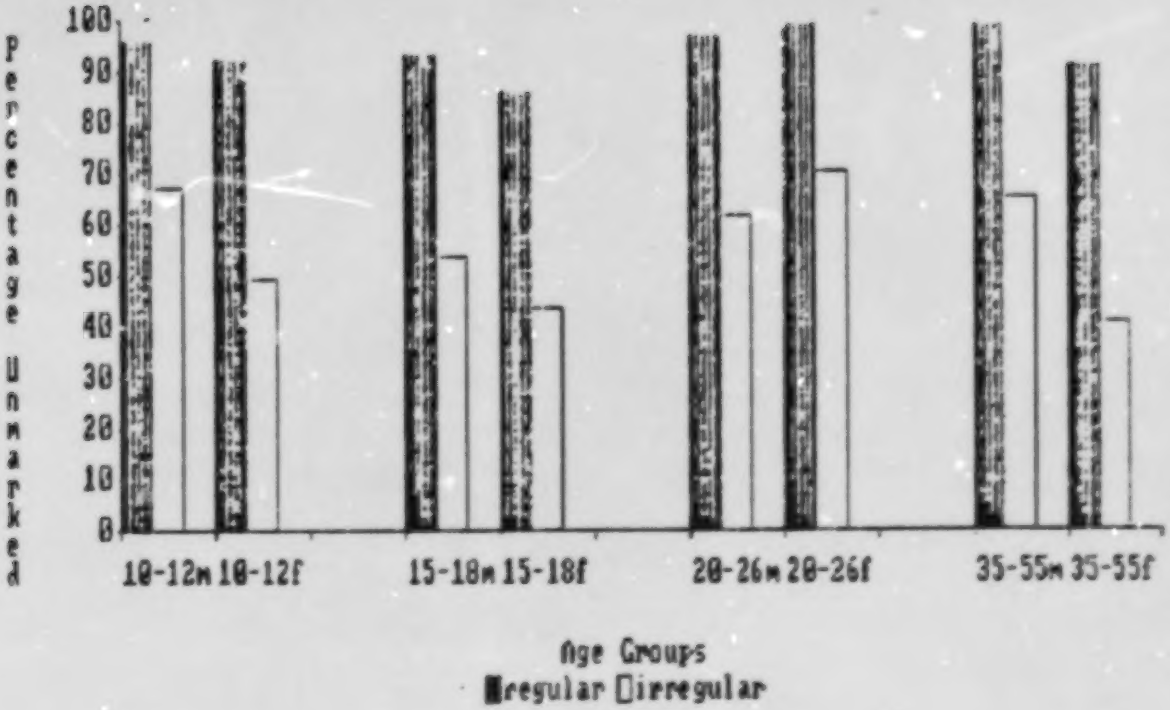
$\bar{X}$ of Unmarked Tense

| | 1-3 Years | | 4-7 Years | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Irregular<br>% | Regular<br>% | Irregular<br>% | Regular<br>% |
| Males | 62.0 | 96.1 | 20.7 | 72.5 |
| Females | 51.1 | 92.1 | 38.5 | 80.2 |

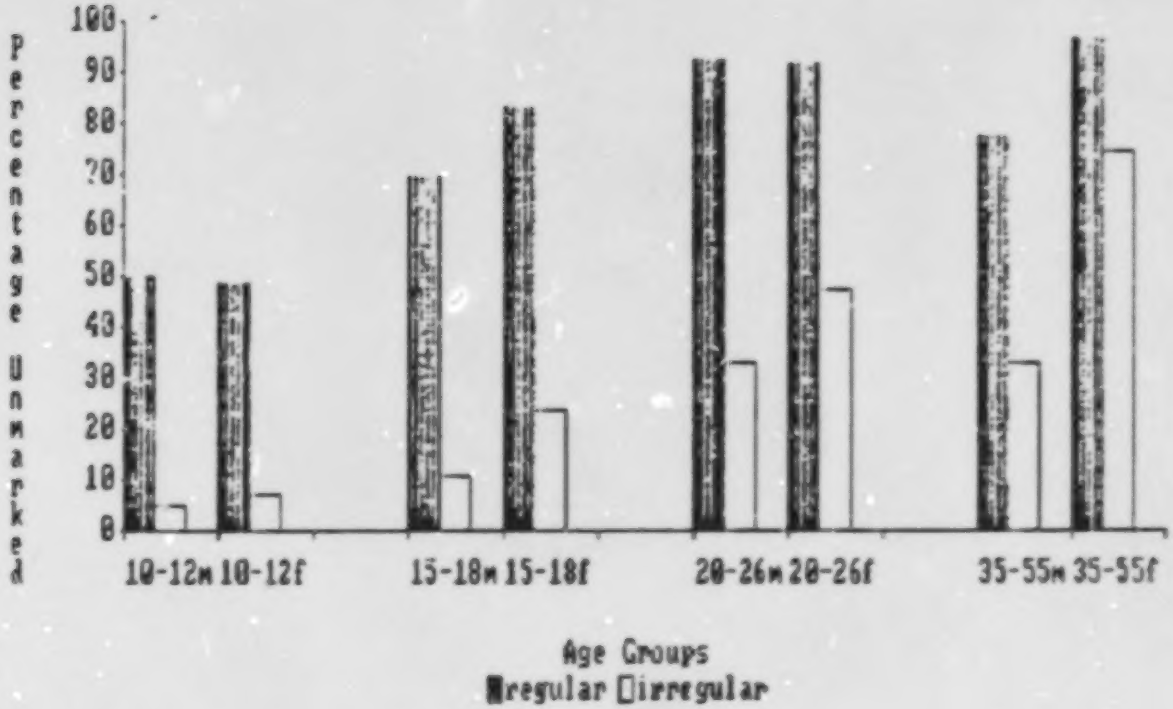
Table 3.5. Incidence of Unmarked Tense for Regular and Irregular Verb Forms, by Sex and Length of Residency

The difference in percentages between the males and females is greater for the irregular verbs than for the regular verbs.

There are many social factors which could contribute to gender patterns such as these. For example, older males tend to be in the job market more that older females, which implies more exposure to English. For those who have been in the United States a long time, this may result in less tense unmarking than for their female counterparts. Before any conclusions can be made as to whether or not these differences are significant, however, speech samples from more subjects need to be analyzed.



1-3 LOR



4-7 LOR

Figure 3.2. Incidence of Unmarked Tense for Regular and Irregular Verb Forms, by Age, Length of Residency and Sex

In general, the differences in tense marking between regular and irregular verb forms may be the result of the additive effect of phonological processes more likely to affect regular forms. By examining regular verbs that have past tense forms ending in a consonant cluster, and categorizing them according to the phonological environment in which they occur, we can observe some evidence which supports the additive explanation.

Previous studies (Fasold 1972; Wolfram and Fasold 1974) have shown that in both standard and nonstandard dialects, final consonant clusters may be reduced when the following segment is a consonant. In nonstandard English dialects this also occurs when the following segment is not a consonant. In Table 3.6 we have shown the tabulations for tense unmarking in regular verbs ending in consonant clusters, differentiated by following environment of consonant versus non-consonant (vowel or pause). For both LOR groups, when all age levels are considered together, there is a tendency for a higher percentage of unmarking to occur in the environments with a following consonant than with a following non-consonant. For the 1-3 LOR group the differences are only slight and probably not significant (95.0% for ___Non C; 98.7% for ___C), but in the 4-7 LOR group they are more substantial (74.9% for ___Non C; 91.0% for ___C). This differentiation holds for each individual age level as well, except for the 20-26 year level in the 4-7 LOR group, for which the trend is reversed. These figures provide some evidence of phonological processes influencing tense marking; that is, a following consonant is an unfavorable environment for marking. The percentages for the two youngest groups in the 4-7 LOR group reveal more tense marking than the other groups, an indication that earlier exposure and longer exposure to English are favorable constraints on tense marking.

As we have observed above, the various ways in which past tense formation occurs for irregular and regular verbs allow us to focus on the possible con-

| Age | Sex | Residency | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1-3 Years | | | | | | | 4-7 Years | | | | | | |
| | | Subj | Abs/T | NonC<br>% Abs | M̄ | Abs/T | C<br>% Abs | M̄ | Subj | Abs/T | NonC<br>% Abs | M̄ | Abs/T | C<br>% Abs | M̄ |
| 10-12 | M | 11 | 6/6 | 100.0 | 95.5 | 9/9 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 19 | 7/22 | 31.8 | 45.5 | 12/13 | 92.3 | 50.9 |
| | | 16 | 12/12 | 100.0 | | 3/3 | 100.0 | | 92 | 2/9 | 22.2 | | 7/9 | 77.8 | |
| | F | 33 | 27/30 | 90.0 | | 18/18 | 100.0 | | 42 | 5/18 | 27.8 | | 1/3 | 33.3 | |
| | | 34 | 34/37 | 91.9 | | 11/11 | 100.0 | | 57 | 1/1 | 100.0 | | 0/1 | 00.0 | |
| 15-18 | M | 37 | 13/16 | 81.3 | 93.2 | 12/12 | 100.0 | 99.1 | 29 | 8/10 | 80.0 | 73.4 | 5/5 | 100.0 | 97.7 |
| | | 84 | 17/18 | 94.4 | | 19/19 | 100.0 | | 43 | 7/11 | 63.6 | | 6/6 | 100.0 | |
| | F | 39 | 32/33 | 97.0 | | 26/27 | 96.3 | | 50 | 4/8 | 50.0 | | 10/11 | 90.9 | |
| | | 47 | 7/7 | 100.0 | | 2/2 | 100.0 | | 51 | 18/18 | 100.0 | | 12/12 | 100.0 | |
| 20-26 | M | 27 | 19/19 | 100.0 | 99.2 | 14/14 | 100.0 | 99.3 | 77 | 18/20 | 90.0 | 96.2 | 9/9 | 100.0 | 93.7 |
| | | 58 | 30/31 | 96.8 | | 18/18 | 100.0 | | 89 | 10/10 | 100.0 | | 5/5 | 100.0 | |
| | F | 83 | 17/17 | 100.0 | | 13/13 | 100.0 | | 65 | 6/6 | 100.0 | | 6/7 | 85.7 | |
| | | 87 | 23/23 | 100.0 | | 35/36 | 97.2 | | 76 | 18/19 | 94.7 | | 8/9 | 88.9 | |
| 35-55 | M | 24 | 4/4 | 100.0 | 94.8 | 2/2 | 100.0 | 97.5 | 74 | 5/7 | 71.4 | 82.9 | 5/5 | 100.0 | 96.0 |
| | | 73 | 17/18 | 94.4 | | 13/13 | 100.0 | | 79 | 3/5 | 60.0 | | 2/2 | 100.0 | |
| | F | 91 | 10/11 | 90.9 | | 19/19 | 100.0 | | 32 | 11/11 | 100.0 | | 21/25 | 84.0 | |
| | | 93 | 15/16 | 93.8 | | 9/10 | 90.0 | | 78 | 32/32 | 100.0 | | 22/22 | 100.0 | |
| Total | | | 283/298 | 95.0 | | 223/226 | 98.7 | | | 155/207 | 74.9 | | 131/144 | 91.0 | |
| Combined Total | | | | | 506/524 | 96.6 | | | | | | 286/351 | 81.5 | | |

Table 3.6. Unmarked Past Tense Involving Consonant Clusters, by Following Environment

vergence of grammatical and phonological processes which result in a form unmarked for tense on the surface. Regular verbs may show a higher percentage of tense unmarking than irregular verbs because of phonological processes resulting from language transfer. In our preliminary examination (Christian et al 1983) and in Wolfram (1984) various non-tense marking lexical items were analyzed in order to distinguish between (1) final consonant cluster reduction in monomorphemic (i.e. single morpheme) items (e.g. cold, mist) and in past tense forms (e.g. called, missed), (2) final lexical /d/ deletion (e.g. raid, guide) and final past tense /d/ deletion (e.g. cried, played), and (3) lexical unstressed /Id/ deletion (e.g. stupid, hundred) and deletion of /Id/ on past tense forms (e.g. wanted, rested). By comparing items in these three categories, it is possible to differentiate between the effects of phonological processes influencing deletion (in the lexical items), and the effect of the combination of grammatical and phonological processes (on the past tense forms). Without performing this type of analysis, we cannot determine whether or not unmarked tense on regular verbs is a result of grammatical or phonological processes, or both.

The analyses which were done on these items in our preliminary studies were not expanded with tabulations from additional subjects in this study. The previous findings are briefly summarized here, so that they may be incorporated with our other results.

If phonological processes are operating in the speech data of these subjects to produce final consonant cluster reduction, these processes should affect lexical clusters as well as past tense clusters. Indeed, an examination of the data revealed that the subjects displayed similar results for reduction of lexical and past tense final consonant clusters (using only tabulations of items in environments of following non-consonant). The percentages for the two groups differed, however. They are summarized below:

| Residency | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1-3 Years | | | | 4-7 Years | | | |
| Lexical Clusters | | Past Clusters | | Lexical Clusters | | Past Clusters | |
| No/T | $\overline{M}$% | No/T | $\overline{M}$% | No/T | $\overline{M}$% | No/T | $\overline{M}$% |
| 124/148 | 83.8 | 163/172 | 95.9 | 115/153 | 75.2 | 60/100 | 63.9 |

Table 3.7. Incidence of Final Consonant Cluster Reduction for Lexical and Past Tense Items

For the 1-3 LOR group the lexical items show less final consonant cluster reduction than the past tense forms, but the opposite occurred for the 4-7 LOR group. In other studies of cluster reduction as a phonological rule (e.g. Labov 1969; Wolfram 1969; Fasold 1972; Baugh 1979) lexical clusters show more reduction than clusters that are a result of the addition of a grammatical suffix. This is apparently due to the fact that the bimorphemic form carries more information so that it is more "essential" to maintain without possible information loss.

For the 1-3 LOR group it appeared that both phonological and grammatical processes may have converged to produce more final consonant cluster reduction in the monomorphemic forms than the bimorphemic forms. Apparently after a variable grammatical rule has been applied to verbs requiring past tense marking, yielding some with the marking and some without it, then a phonological rule applies (as it also would to lexical final consonant clusters) which reduces the final consonant clusters in the marked subset of these forms.

The comparison of deletion of lexical final /d/ with that of past tense final /d/ revealed patterns in both LOR groups that were parallel to those found in the 1-3 LOR group in the discussion of final consonant cluster reduction. The results of the previous study are shown in Table 3.8.

|  | Residency |  |  |  |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | 1-3 Years |  | 4-7 Years |  |
|  | No/T | $\overline{M}$% | No/T | $\overline{M}$% |
| /d/ on Regular Verb Forms | 73/84 | 86.9 | 27/41 | 65.9 |
| Lexical /d/ | 47/180 | 26.1 | 56/174 | 32.2 |

Table 3.8. Absence of Final /d/ on Regular Verb Forms and Final Lexical /d/, by Length of Residency

These figures show that final /d/ deletion was considerably higher for the past tense items than for the lexical items, as was found for the 1-3 LOR group for consonant clusters. Again this points to a convergence of phonological and grammatical processes which operate on regular verb forms to produce high levels of tense unmarking. In this case the grammatical rule seems to have a stronger influence, given the relatively low deletion rates with the lexical items.

Finally, Wolfram (1984) reported that absence of the past tense /Id/ form was very high compared to deletion of a final unstressed /Id/ on lexical forms. For the 1-3 LOR group 15 out of 17 cases (88%) were unmarked, with unmarking in 25 out of 41 cases (61%) for the 4-7 LOR group. In contrast only 5 out of 43 cases (12%) of lexical /Id/ were deleted for the 1-3 LOR group. This is apparently a case in which the variable grammatical rule has the most influence.

Tabulations on the absence of final /d/ and final unstressed /Id/ on regular verbs for our entire sample of 32 subjects are presented in Tables 3.9 and 3.10, respectively. For /d/, our figures reveal a higher incidence of deletion for the 1-3 LOR group (91.9%) than for the 4-7 LOR group (77.2%), when tabulations are combined for all subjects in the LOR groups. Three out of the four age levels in the 1-3 LOR group reveal over 90 percent unmarking, while the mean group percentage for the second age level (15-18 - 70.1%) is influenced

| | | Residency | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1-3 Years | | | | | | 4-7 Years | | | | | |
| ge | Sex | Subj | Non C Abs/T | C Abs/T | Total | % | M̄ | Subj | Non C Abs/T | C Abs/T | Total | % | M̄ |
| 0-12 | M | 11 | 6/6 | 2/2 | 8/8 | 100.0 | 92.1 | 19 | 0/8 | 1/1 | 1/9 | 11.1 | 33.3 |
| | | 16 | 9/9 | 1/2 | 10/11 | 90.9 | | 92 | 2/6 | 0/3 | 2/9 | 22.2 | |
| | F | 33 | 6/7 | 7/7 | 13/14 | 92.9 | | 42 | 0/1 | - | 0/1 | 0.0 | |
| | | 34 | 9/11 | 2/2 | 11/13 | 84.6 | | 57 | 2/2 | - | 2/2 | 100.0 | |
| 5-18 | M | 37 | 14/14 | 2/2 | 16/16 | 100.0 | 70.1 | 29 | 3/4 | 4/5 | 7/9 | 77.8 | 68.3 |
| | | 84 | 8/8 | 10/11 | 18/19 | 94.7 | | 43 | 3/5 | 2/6 | 5/11 | 45.5 | |
| | F | 39 | 6/8 | 6/6 | 12/14 | 85.7 | | 50 | 0/1 | 1/1 | 1/2 | 50.0 | |
| | | 47 | 0/2 | - | 0/2 | 0.0 | | 51 | 1/1 | 4/4 | 5/5 | 100.0 | |
| 0-26 | M | 27 | 7/8 | 7/8 | 14/16 | 87.5 | 93.1 | 77 | 4/4 | 1/1 | 5/5 | 100.0 | 75.0 |
| | | 58 | 15/15 | 2/4 | 17/19 | 89.5 | | 89 | 4/4 | 5/5 | 9/9 | 100.0 | |
| | F | 83 | 16/17 | 5/5 | 21/22 | 95.5 | | 65 | - | 0/1 | 0/1 | 00.0 | |
| | | 87 | 11/11 | 17/17 | 28/28 | 100.0 | | 76 | 3/3 | 4/4 | 7/7 | 100.0 | |
| 5-55 | M | 24 | 1/1 | - | 1/1 | 100.0 | 91.7 | 74 | - | 2/2 | 2/2 | 100.0 | 87.5 |
| | | 73 | 3/3 | 1/1 | 4/4 | 100.0 | | 79 | 2/4 | - | 2/4 | 50.0 | |
| | F | 91 | - | 5/5 | 5/5 | 100.0 | | 32 | 11/11 | 19/19 | 30/30 | 100.0 | |
| | | 93 | 3/3 | 1/3 | 4/6 | 66.7 | | 78 | 10/10 | 7/7 | 17/17 | 100.0 | |
| otal | | | 114/123 | 68/75 | 182/198 | | | | 45/64 | 50/59 | 95/123 | | |
| | | | 92.7 | 90.7 | 91.9 | | | | 70.3 | 84.7 | 77.2 | | |

Table 3.9. Absence of Final /d/ on Regular Verb Forms

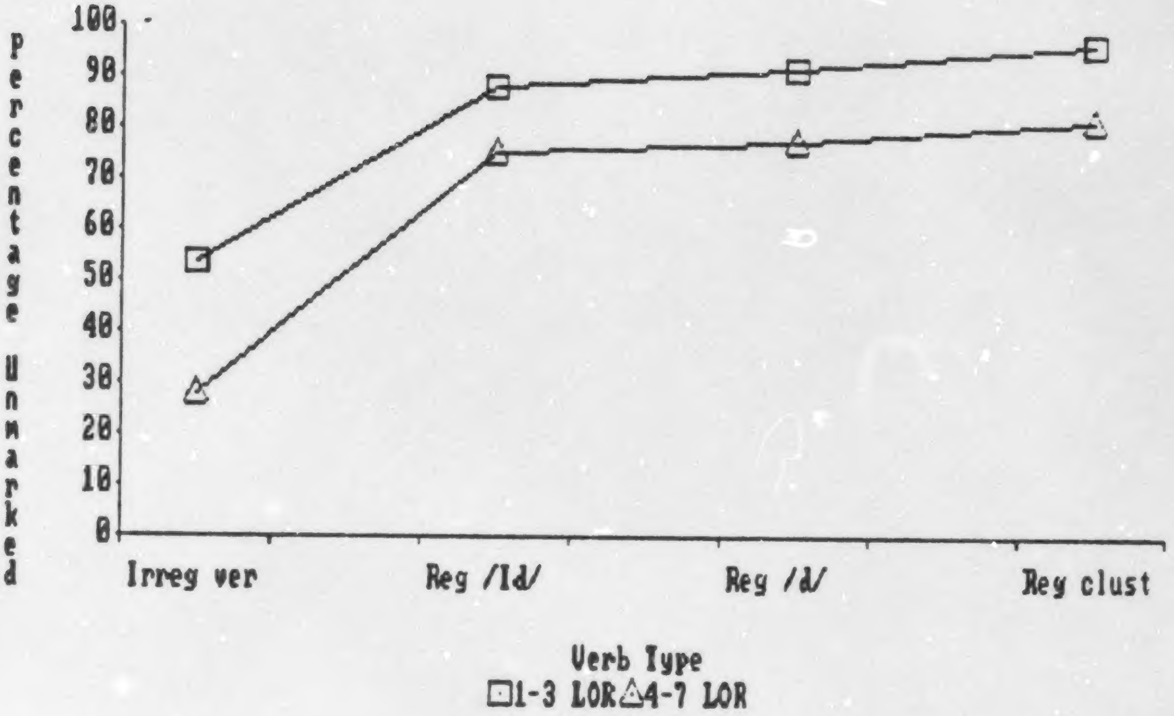
(lowered) by the score for one subject in the group (who had only two possible cases, and none marked). In the 4-7 LOR group, unmarking according to group percentages by age level shows an increase in incidence of unmarking by increase in age level (10-12 - 33.3%; 15-18 - 68.3%; 20-26 - 75.0%; and 35-55 - 87.5%). In this 4-7 LOR group apparently both exposure to English at a younger age and for longer periods of time contribute to a higher incidence of use of final /d/ to mark regular verbs. However, age level does not appear to have much influence for the 1-3 LOR group. Also, for the 4-7 LOR group, incidence of unmarking seems to be influenced by the following phonological environment of the regular verb. For a following non-consonant deletion was 70.3 percent (45/64), whereas for a following consonant deletion was 84.7 percent (50/59). These percentages are an indication of the influence of phonological processes on tense unmarking - deletion of /d/ occurs less often when followed by a vowel or pause versus a consonant.

For /Id/, Table 3.10 shows a minor difference for the two LOR groups - 87.9 percent (58/66) absence for the 1-3 group and 75.5 percent (83/110) for the 4-7 group. Because our data did not contain many possible occurrences of this form, we have only presented the totals and percentages for groups.

In Figure 3.3 we have presented summary tabulations for all age groups and a graph of the three phonological realizations of regular verbs and of irregular verbs. As Figure 3.3 demonstrates, our subjects had much higher rates of unmarked tense for all types of regular past tense than for the irregular verbs. This coincides with the findings presented in Christian et al (1983) and Wolfram (1984). The pattern for the various types of marking on regular verbs is that those marked with final consonant clusters have slightly more tense unmarking than those verbs marked with /d/, which in turn reveal slightly more tense unmarking than those forms marked with /Id/. It was speculated in Christian et

|  |  | Residency |  |  |  |  |  |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  | 1-3 Years |  |  | 4-7 Years |  |  |
| Age | Sex | Subj | Abs/T | % | Subj | Abs/T | % |
| 10-12 | M | 11 | 4/4 |  | 19 | 5/14 |  |
|  |  | 16 | 12/14 |  | 92 | 11/11 |  |
|  | F | 33 | 1/1 |  | 42 | 0/1 |  |
|  |  | 34 | - |  | 57 | 7/10 |  |
| 15-18 | M | 37 | 9/11 |  | 29 | 1/2 |  |
|  |  | 84 | 8/9 |  | 43 | 3/8 |  |
|  | F | 39 | 6/6 |  | 50 | 2/3 |  |
|  |  | 47 | 1/2 |  | 51 | 6/8 |  |
| 20-26 | M | 27 | 2/2 |  | 77 | 5/8 |  |
|  |  | 58 | 1/2 |  | 89 | 2/3 |  |
|  | F | 83 | 6/6 |  | 65 | 4/4 |  |
|  |  | 87 | 2/2 |  | 76 | 6/6 |  |
| 35-55 | M | 24 | 3/3 |  | 74 | 10/10 |  |
|  |  | 73 | 1/1 |  | 79 | - |  |
|  | F | 91 | 1/1 |  | 32 | 13/13 |  |
|  |  | 93 | 1/2 |  | 78 | 8/9 |  |
| Total |  |  | 58/66 | 87.9 |  | 83/110 | 75.5 |

Table 3.10. Absence of Final /Id/ on Regular Verb Forms



| | Residency | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1-3 LOR | | 4-7 LOR | |
| | Unm/T | % | Unm/T | % |
| Irreg. Verbs | 1501/2768 | 54.2 | 590/2078 | 28.4 |
| Reg. /Id/ | 58/66 | 87.9 | 83/110 | 75.5 |
| Reg. /d/ | 182/198 | 91.9 | 95/123 | 77.2 |
| Reg. Clusters | 506/524 | 96.6 | 286/351 | 81.5 |

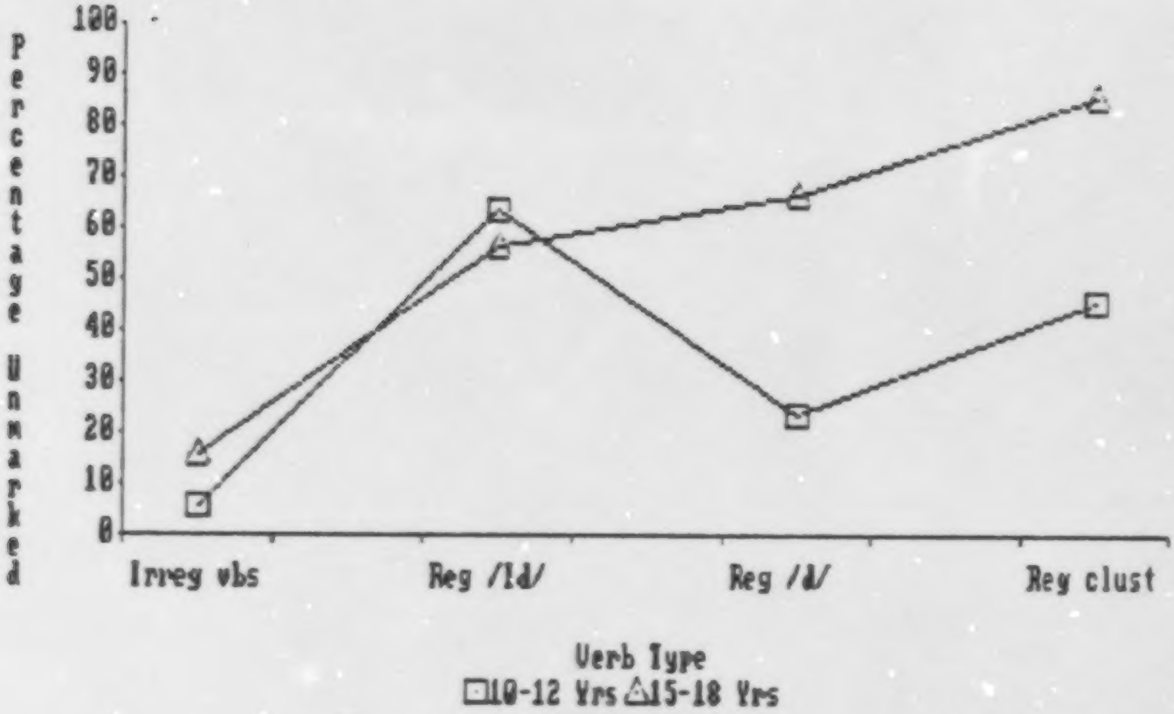
Figure 3.3. Incidence of Unmarked Tense for Irregular and Regular Verbs

al (1983) that part of this pattern is due to phonological processes resulting from language transfer, which affect final /d/ less than final consonant clusters. Vietnamese does not have final consonant clusters, but it does have a final /t/, the voiceless counterpart of /d/. The figures presented here provide further evidence that there may be a constraint on unmarking due to type of regular verb.

The youngest group in the 4-7 LOR group did not maintain this pattern (Figure 3.4). Both groups shown here had less unmarked tense for irregular verbs than for any of the regular verbs. The subjects in the 10-12 group, however, showed the least unmarking with the verbs marked with /d/ singleton, and the most with /Id/ (for the regular verbs).

There are several factors which may contribute to the overall findings on tense unmarking that we have reported up to this point. One explanation for tense unmarking is that because Vietnamese is an aspectual language and has no morphological marking of verb forms, native Vietnamese speakers simply do not mark some verbs for past tense in English, or do so variably. This is a grammatical process. These L2 speakers may have no grammatical rule in their interlanguage that adds tense marking to a verb, or may have a variable rule. Besides the grammatical processes, the evidence suggests the intersection of phonological processes.

With respect to the difference in marking between irregular and regular verb forms, it appears that phonological processes have a role in causing regular forms to be marked less often than irregular forms. Influences due to language transfer seem to affect all forms of regular past tense, especially those formed with consonant clusters. Also, there is evidence from both first and second language acquisition studies (Brown 1973:311-312; Houck et al 1978) that irregular past tense forms are acquired prior to regular past tense forms. The



4-7 Length of Residency

| | Age Levels | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 10-12 | | 15-18 | |
| | Unm/T | % | Unm/T | % |
| Irreg. Verbs | 38/599 | 6.3 | 93/581 | 16.0 |
| Reg. /Id/ | 23/36 | 63.7 | 12/21 | 57.1 |
| Reg. /d/ | 5/21 | 23.8 | 18/27 | 66.7 |
| Reg. Cons. Cluster | 35/76 | 46.1 | 70/81 | 86.4 |

Figure 3.4. Incidence of Unmarked Tense for Irregular and Regular Verbs, for Two Youngest Groups in 4-7 Length of Residency Group

results of this study show that all ages of native Vietnamese speakers acquiring English in both the 1-3 and 4-7 LOR groups have more tense marking on irregular that regular verbs.

Another factor influencing regular versus irregular verbs is learning strategies. Past tense forms of irregular verbs are, for the most part, subject to learning by rote memorization, whereas past tense marking for regular forms is more subject to patterned learning. As we reported in Christian et al (1983), the members of the Vietnamese refugee community are highly motivated toward success in school and at work, and they spend long hours studying English. Given their level of motivation, they probably focus on learning such things as the past tense forms of irregular verbs; that is, items that they can learn by rote. Also, the Vietnamese school system emphasizes rote learning more than does the American school system, so the Vietnamese refugees in this country are probably accustomed to learning by rote more than by pattern.

A final factor which may contribute to the pattern of more tense marking for irregular verbs than for regular verbs is perception of phonological elements. It has been reported to us by an ESL teacher (personal communication) that at times Vietnamese students (among others) do not write down final consonants within final consonant clusters even when copying lexical items from a blackboard. Perhaps our subjects sometimes do not perceive the phonological elements which mark tense on regular verbs. We speculate that all of these factors converge to produce the patterns which we have so far reported.

### Variation by Type of Irregular Verb

In our discussion up to this point we have reported on unmarked tense in irregular verbs without subdividing this verb category. In Christian et al (1983) we found evidence that all irregular verbs are not affected by tense unmarking in the same way, when we investigated patterns of unmarking for five frequently used irregular forms, and for subtypes of irregular verbs. In this section of the chapter we add to the previous tabulations and discuss whether or not the patterns which we found are maintained with the expansion of data.

We first examine the incidence of tense marking for five frequently used verbs: tense-carrying forms of be (am, is, are vs. was and were); auxiliary and main verb do/don't; auxiliary and main verb have; come; and go. These occurred often during the interviews with the subjects because of some of the topics which were discussed, for example, leaving Vietnam and arriving in the United States. However, they are also used frequently in spoken English in general.

The tabulations for all 32 subjects are presented in Table 3.11, and in summary figures (by LOR group) in graph form in Figure 3.5. As we discovered in our first study, there is strong evidence for differentiation in amount of tense marking by lexical items, with have revealing the highest percentage of unmarked tense, and the various forms of be the least unmarking. Figure 3.5 displays an almost parallel relationship in marking for these verbs between the 1-3 LOR group and the 4-7 LOR group, except for an overlap for come.

Figure 3.5 is based on the mean score for each verb (determined by the total number of unmarked occurrences divided by total possible occurrences) for all subjects in each LOR group. Figures 3.6 and 3.7 represent the percentage of unmarking for each verb, for each individual subject, by age group and LOR group. For those subjects who had no possible occurrences for a particular verb, the line graph continues but has no symbol for the subject at that point. A disadvantage in examining the data in this manner (scores for each subject individually) is that some subjects have very few possible occurrences of unmarking for particular verbs, which may cause distortions in the patterns. However, there is a good representation of each verb for most of the subjects.

The patterns of variation which we discovered in Figure 3.5 are not

| | | Residency | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1-3 Years | | | | | | 4-7 Years | | | | | |
| Age | Sex | Subj | {is}/{was}<br>{are}/{were}<br>Um/T | go/went<br>Um/T | have/had<br>Um/T | come/came<br>Um/T | {do}/{did}<br>{don't}/{didn't}<br>Um/T | Subj | {is}/{was}<br>{are}/{were}<br>Um/T | go/went<br>Um/T | have/had<br>Um/T | come/came<br>Um/T | {do}/{did}<br>{don't}/{didn't}<br>Um/T |
| 10-12 | M | 11 | 7/9 | 22/22 | 2/2 | 5/5 | 6/6 | 19 | 1/87 | 1/29 | 0/13 | 1/8 | 2/18 |
| | | 16 | 5/59 | 40/40 | 19/19 | 15/18 | 13/24 | 92 | 1/37 | 0/4 | 3/5 | 0/22 | 0/6 |
| | F | 33 | 0/47 | 4/40 | 31/35 | 16/28 | 16/31 | 42 | 0/45 | 1/17 | 1/15 | 0/2 | 3/11 |
| | | 34 | 1/80 | 15/19 | 20/20 | 19/19 | 2/27 | 57 | 0/27 | 1/10 | 1/5 | - | 0/7 |
| 15-18 | M | 37 | 38/38 | 7/15 | 20/23 | 3/12 | 5/31 | 29 | 2/55 | 1/19 | 10/25 | 0/1 | 0/15 |
| | | 84 | 5/18 | 8/12 | 29/31 | 13/75 | 14/37 | 43 | 3/94 | 1/13 | 7/37 | 0/4 | 3/14 |
| | F | 39 | 29/32 | 1/4 | 37/38 | 6/44 | 9/50 | 50 | 3/6 | 0/13 | 2/4 | 0/1 | 1/7 |
| | | 47 | 4/18 | - | 16/18 | 1/12 | 4/15 | 51 | 1/39 | 4/10 | 12/26 | 0/5 | 8/29 |
| 20-26 | M | 27 | 11/21 | 19/24 | 14/16 | 9/12 | 11/36 | 77 | 5/36 | 6/14 | 11/14 | 5/13 | 4/14 |
| | | 58 | 7/13 | 5/6 | 52/56 | 3/21 | 8/17 | 89 | 1/39 | 12/17 | 6/13 | 0/1 | 4/14 |
| | F | 83 | 4/4 | 9/19 | 15/15 | 4/28 | 11/23 | 65 | 3/6 | 5/9 | 6/6 | 2/6 | 5/7 |
| | | 87 | 3/3 | 10/12 | 16/16 | 13/14 | 13/14 | 76 | 7/25 | 5/11 | 13/14 | 7/26 | 15/31 |
| 35-55 | M | 24 | 3/6 | 3/6 | 2/2 | 1/1 | - | 74 | 15/31 | 2/3 | 1/2 | 0/6 | 0/1 |
| | | 73 | 4/10 | 5/5 | 2/3 | 0/2 | 1/1 | 79 | 0/3 | 0/2 | 4/5 | 0/7 | 0/2 |
| | F | 91 | 7/39 | 0/7 | 19/22 | 1/8 | 0/19 | 32 | 4/4 | 8/8 | 5/14 | 27/29 | 13/15 |
| | | 93 | 5/12 | 2/3 | 5/6 | 0/7 | 6/6 | 78 | 6/10 | 32/37 | 29/29 | 20/20 | 9/24 |
| Total | | | 133/409 | 150/234 | 299/322 | 109/306 | 119/337 | | 52/544 | 79/216 | 111/227 | 62/151 | 67/215 |
| % | | | 32.5 | 64.1 | 92.9 | 35.6 | 35.3 | | 9.6 | 36.6 | 48.9 | 41.0 | 31.2 |

Table 3.11. Incidence of Unmarked Tense for Five Frequently Occurring Verbs

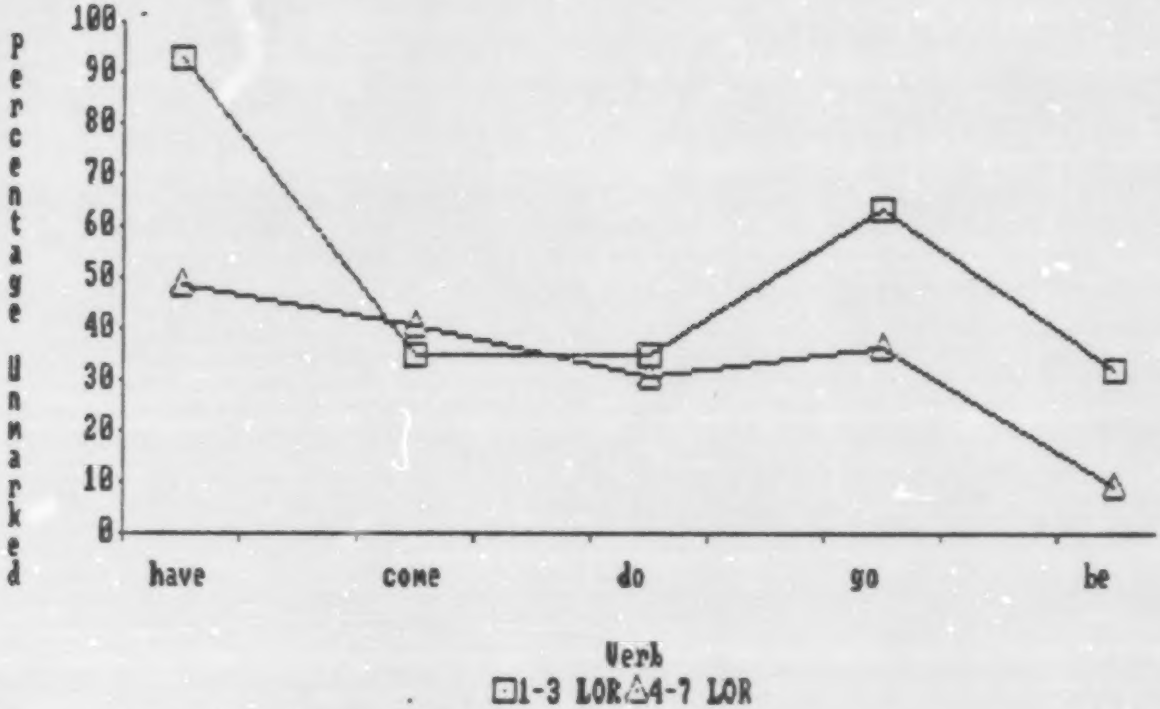
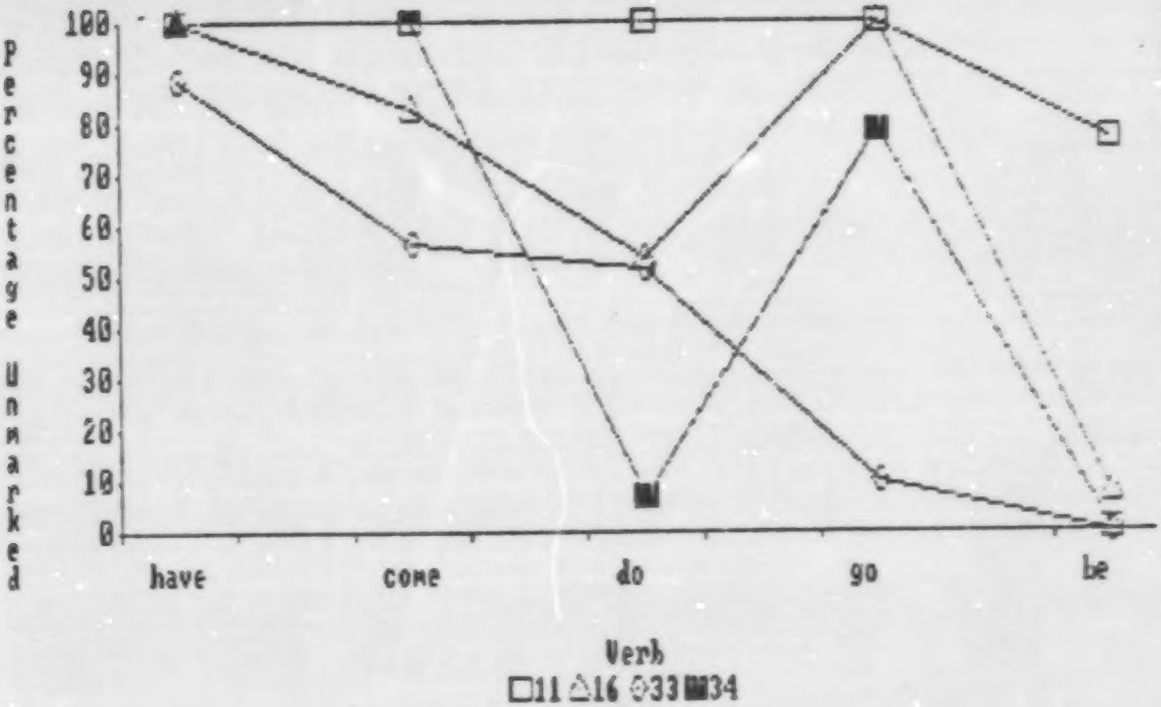
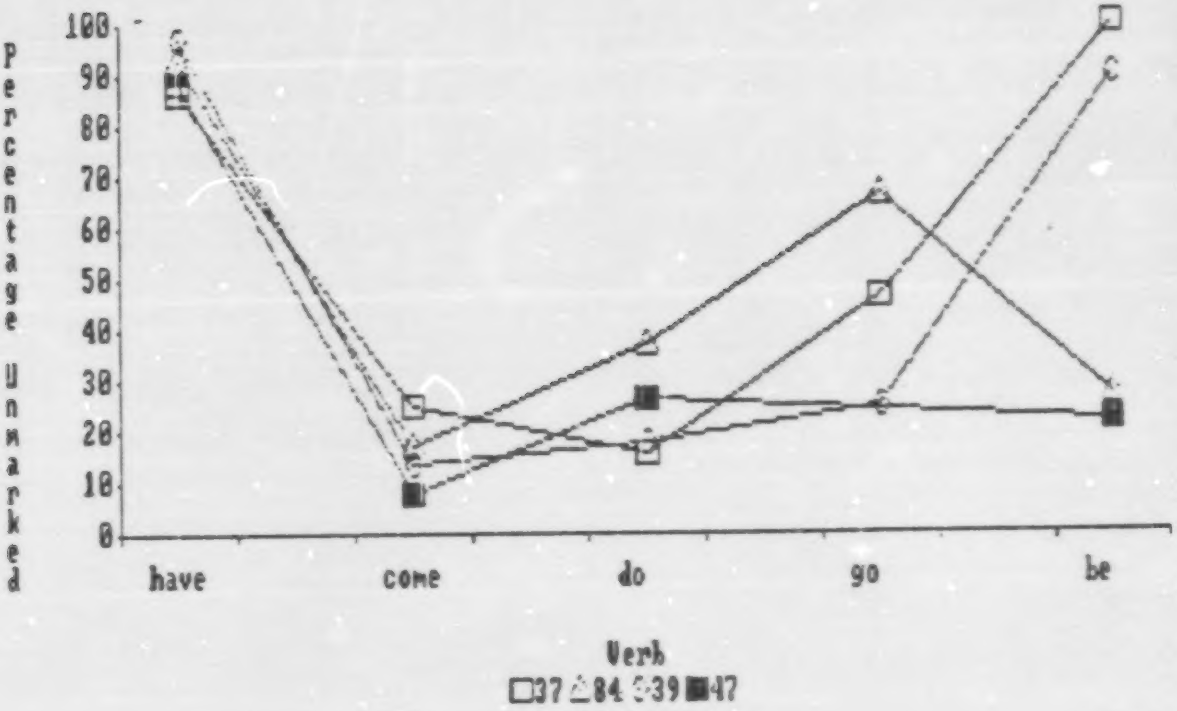


Figure 3.5. Unmarked Tense for Five Frequently Occurring Verbs, by Length of Residency

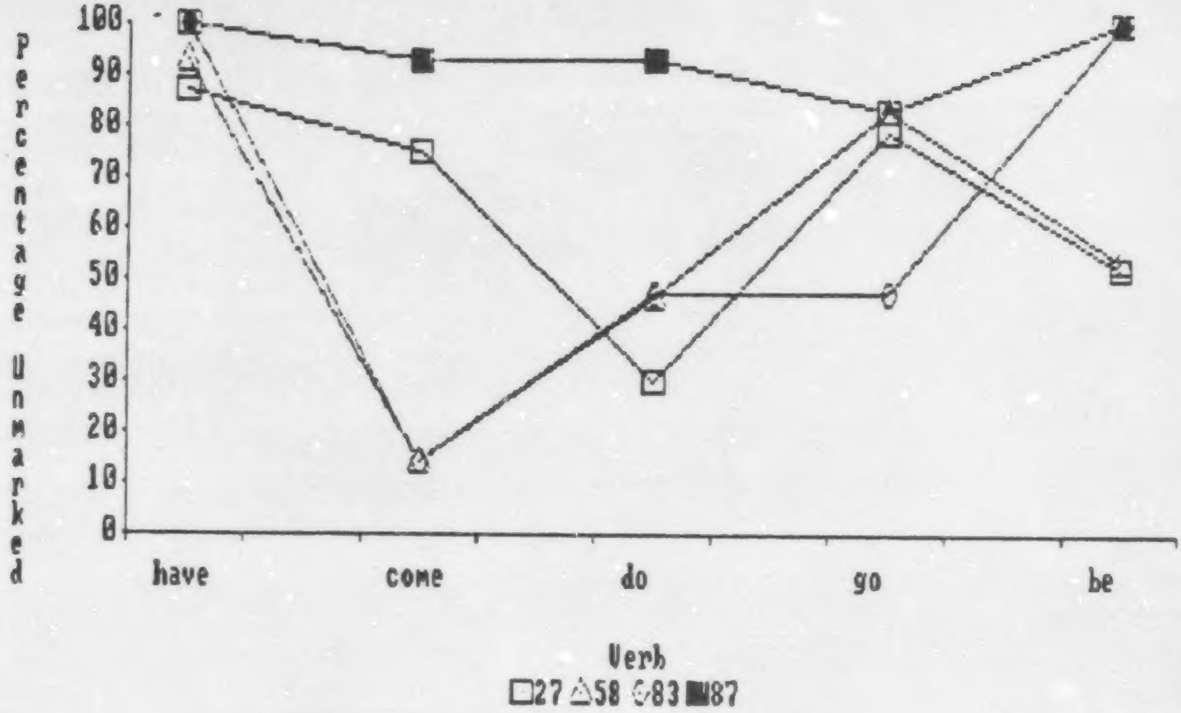


10-12 Years

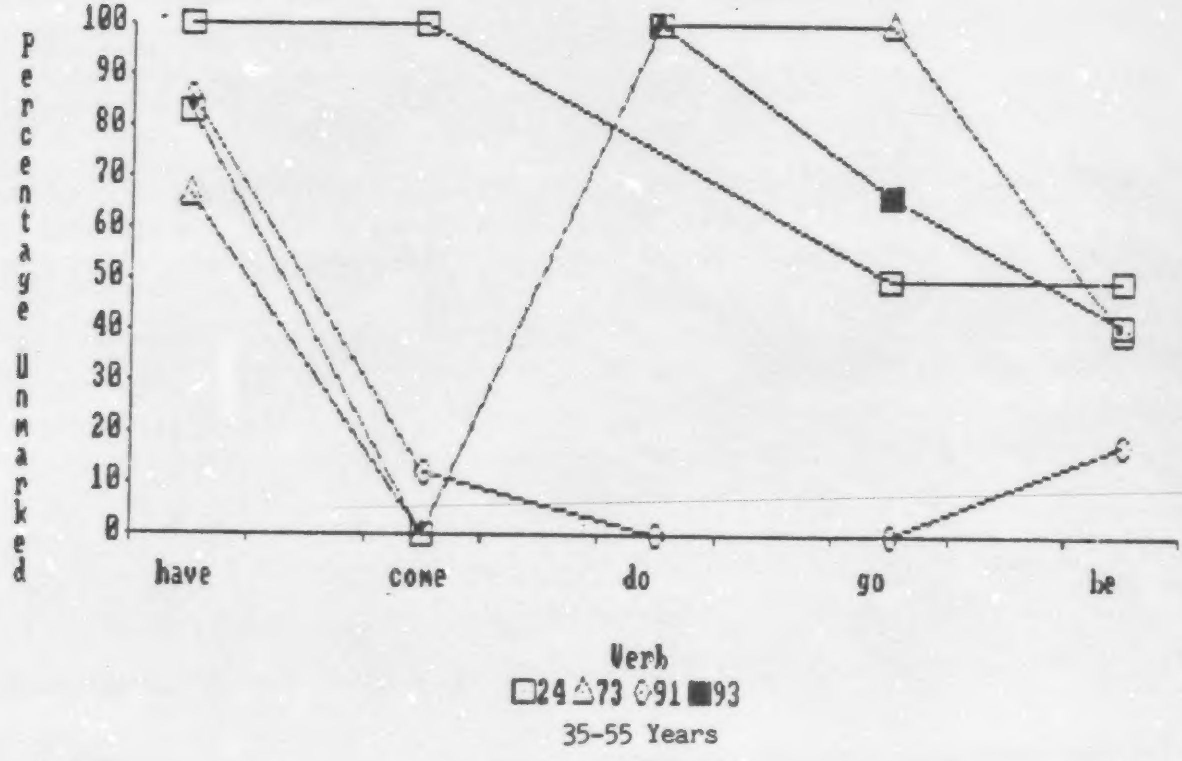


15-18 Years

Figure 3.6. Percentage of Unmarked Tense for Five Frequently Occurring Verbs, by Individual Subjects, in 1-3 Length of Residency Group

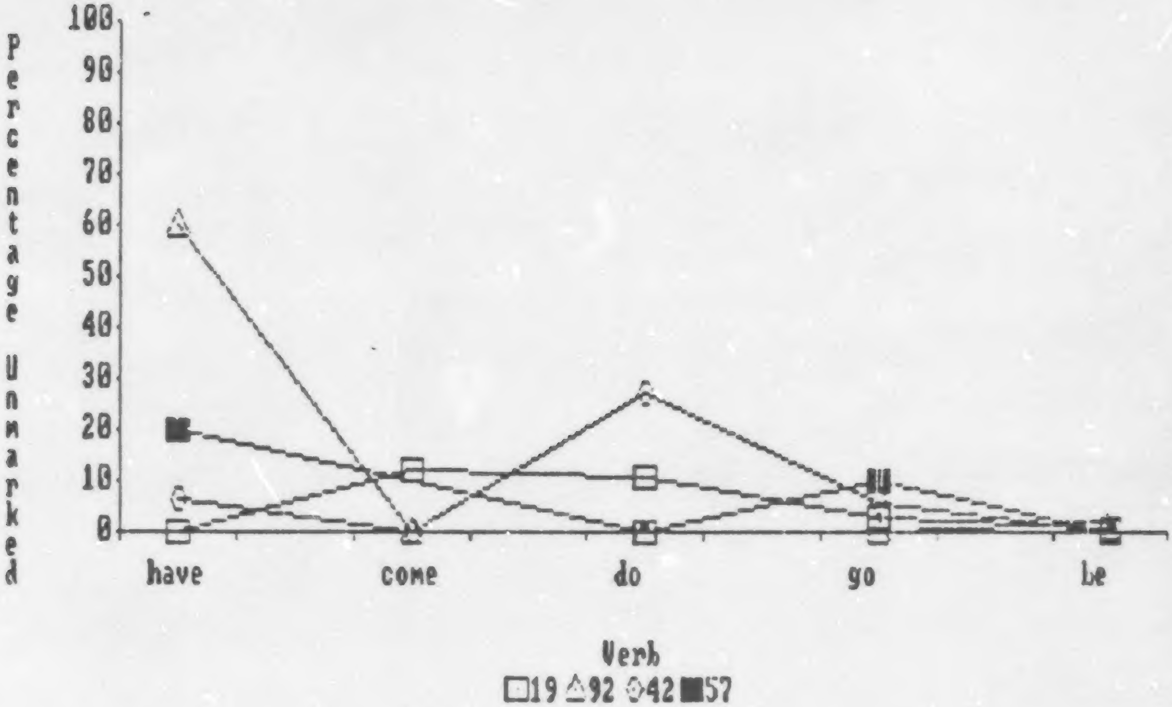


20-26 Years

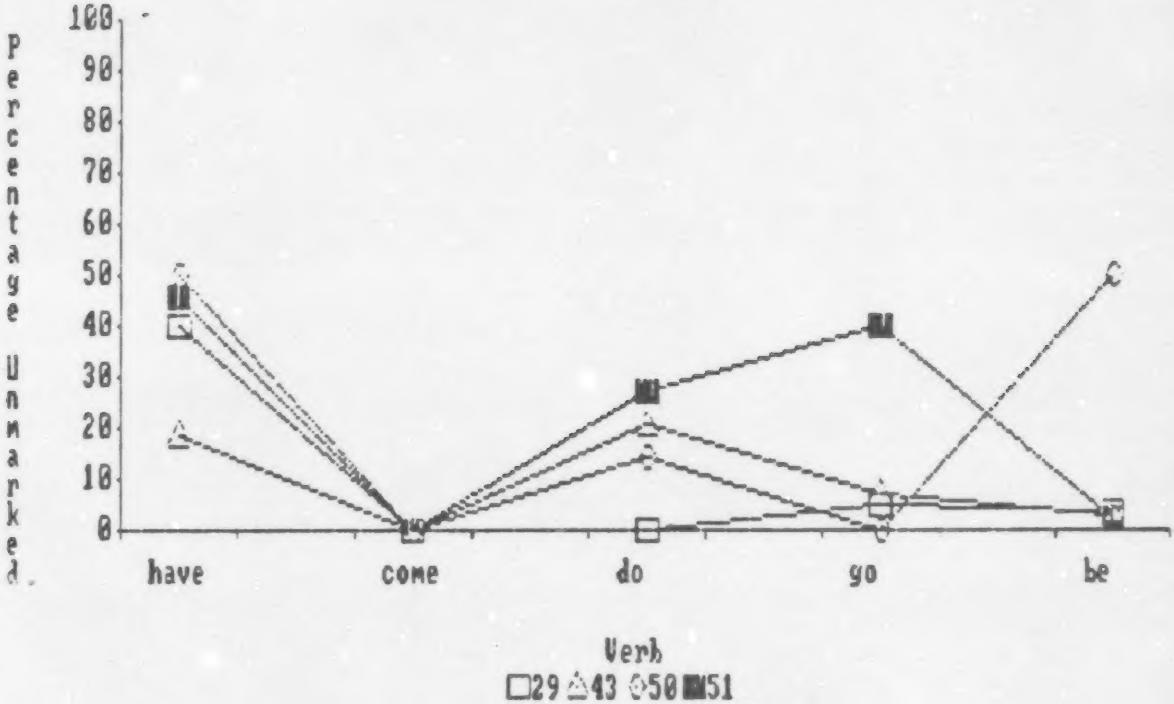


35-55 Years

Figure 3.6. (continued) Percentage of Unmarked Tense for Five Frequently Occurring Verbs, by Individual Subjects, in 1-3 Length of Residency Group

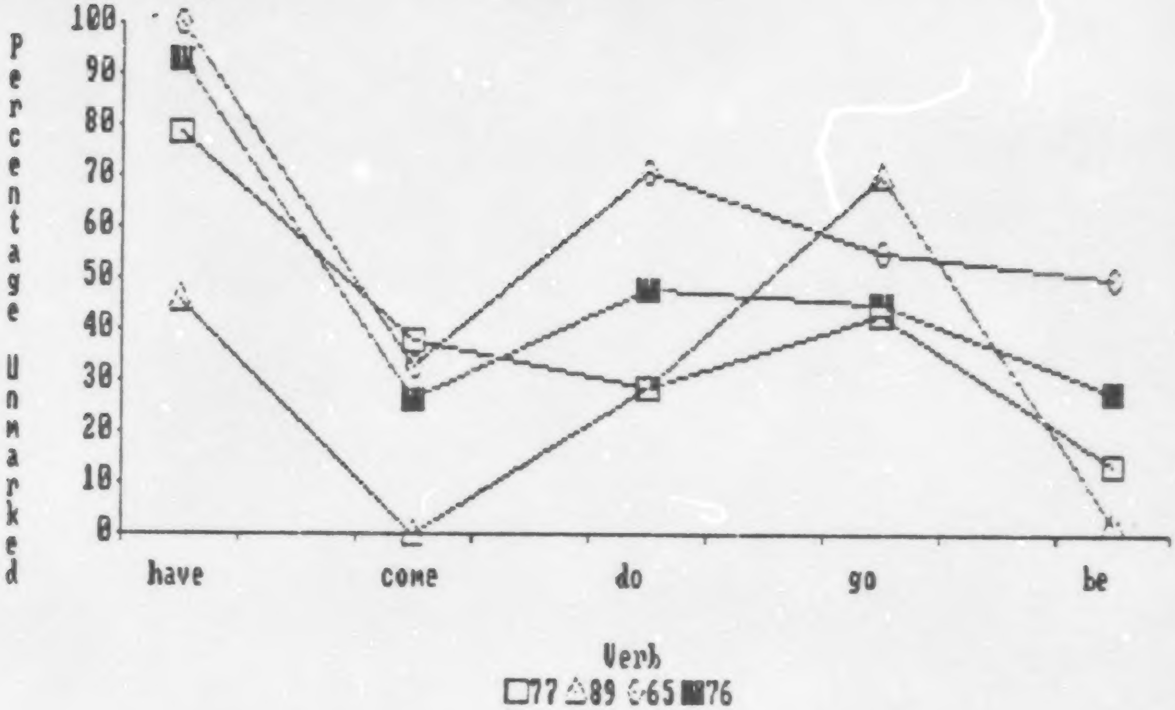


10-12 Years

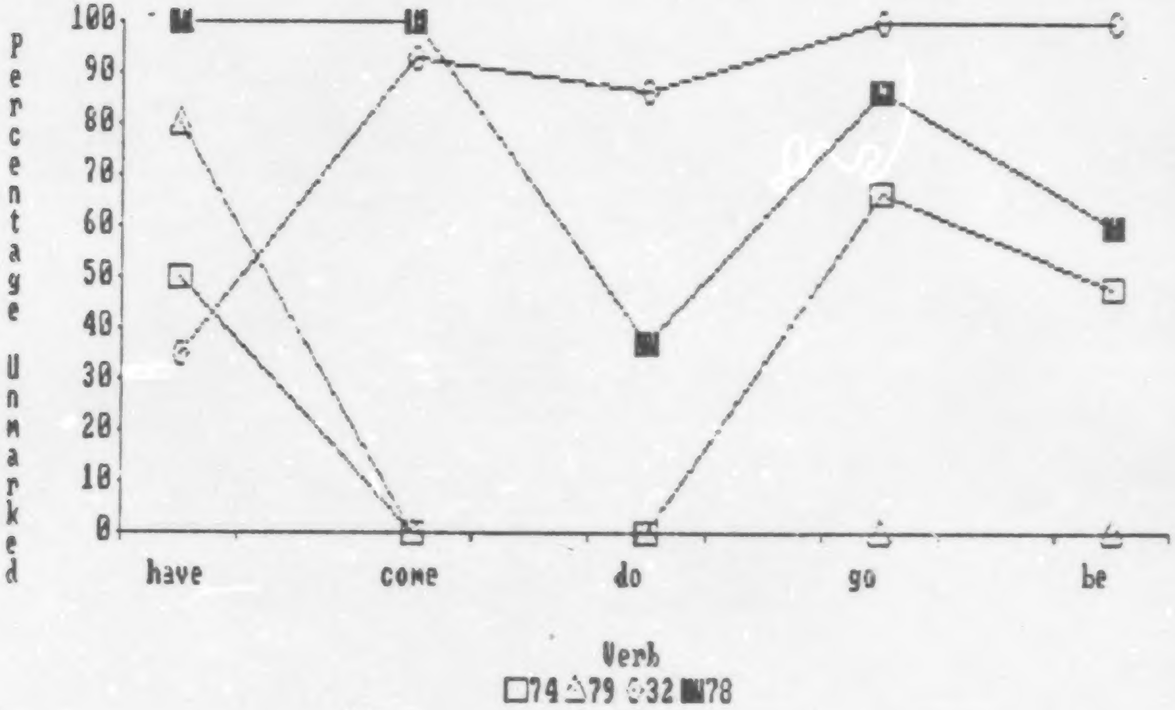


15-18 Years

Figure 3.7. Percentage of Unmarked Tense for Five Frequently Occurring Verbs, by Individual Subjects, in 4-7 Length of Residency Group



20-26 Years



35-55 Years

Figure 3.7. (continued) Percentage of Unmarked Tense for Five Frequently Occurring Verbs, by Individual Subjects, in 4-7 Length of Residency Group necessarily maintained when we look at individuals' scores in Figures 3.6 and 3.7. For the entire 1-3 LOR group the lexical item have still appears to be the most unmarked form overall. For the 10-12 year olds, be is still the form with the least unmarking, but this relationship is not maintained for the other groups, for all subjects. Come seems to be the form with the least unmarking after be. For the 4-7 LOR group, have is again the form which is, for most subjects, the one which has the most unmarking. For the three youngest age groups come and be are, generally, the forms with the least amount of unmarked occurrences, although there are some subjects, (e.g. Subject # 50), who do not follow the pattern. This is the case for the individuals, even though in Table 3.11 and Figure 3.5, come had a percentage of 41.0 versus 9.6 for be. The mean score for come was distorted by scores for two of the subjects in the 35-55 year group, who together had many possible occurrences of came with few which were marked (27/29 - Subject # 32; 20/20 --Subject # 78). However, the total number of possible occurrences for the 16 subjects was only 151 (62/151 - 41.0%). The skewing in this score contributed to the cross-over pattern in Figure 3.5 which we discussed above. For the oldest age level in the 4-7 LOR group, there does not appear to be a pattern consistent with the other subjects.

The scores for these five frequently used verbs reveal that even though we discover nearly parallel patterns between the two LOR groups, there is much individual variation. It seems probable that, as was discussed in Christian et al (1983) and Wolfram (1984), individuals who are acquiring English concentrate on acquiring the past tense form of particular lexical items, as a learning strategy. As they have had more exposure to English, and more time that they have spent learning it, their use of tense marking increases and percentages for these lexical items level out, as we can see in the two youngest levels in the 4-7 LOR group (Figure 3.7). The two oldest levels in that group, however, still have high percentages of unmarking with varying patterns, the less variable one being the 20-26 year old group. This finding is consistent with the fact that the younger subjects had generally acquired more native-like production ability than the older subjects.

We have just described the tense marking patterns of five frequently occurring irregular verbs. In Christian et al (1983) we provided evidence to show that not only are there lexical constraints on tense marking in irregular verbs, but there appear to be constraints based on type of irregular verb. As was discussed above briefly, the various methods by which the past tense marking of irregular verbs is formed can be divided into four categories, which fall along a continuum of phonetic distance in the non-past and past tense forms of a verb. These four categories are: (1) suppletive (e.g. tense-carrying forms of be); (2) internal vowel change plus final regular formation (e.g. say/said); (3) internal vowel change (e.g. come/came); and (4) replacive consonant (e.g. have/had). For some of these forms there is the possibility of grammatical and phonological convergence. For example, for the two types which utilize internal vowel change, there is the possibility that because of language transfer mechanisms, the vowel in the base form versus the one in the past tense form may not be represented in the language system of the Vietnamese English speaker. For those types which use a replacive consonant or add a suffix (which is a /t/ or /d/), this final consonant also may not be a part of the speaker's language system, due to the absence of final /d/ in Vietnamese. The five frequently used verbs which we have examined cover each of these sub-categories of irregular verbs.

There is one factor that is important to note in discussing the various percentages of unmarking for the past tense forms which result from an internal vowel change versus an internal vowel change plus a suffix, because it may have an effect on patterns of unmarking. If a form which marks past tense by an internal vowel change and the addition of the past tense suffix was produced by the speaker with the vowel change but without the suffix, it was scored as marked for past tense. Often subjects did not produce final consonants on many words, not just on verbs. The change in vowels would be enough to mark these forms for past in the perception of native English speakers. Also, as we discussed above for another category, Vietnamese English speakers may not perceive an added suffix or a change in a final consonant, which may contribute to high tense unmarking for forms which utilize these to represent past tense.

In Table 3.12 we have tabulated for each subject the percentage of unmarked tense for each of these four categories of irregular verbs, as well as mean percentages by age level, and total tabulations and percentages for each type of verb. The results are displayed in mean percentages for the LOR groups in Figure 3.8, and further broken down by age levels in Figure 3.9. Figure 3.8 reveals a pattern which is consistent with the one discussed in Christian _et al_ (1983) and Wolfram (1984). That is, the greater the phonetic distance between the base form and the past tense form of an irregular verb, the more likely it is to be marked for past tense in the data. Replacives are the forms which are the least distant phonetically, whereas suppletives are the most distant. However, there is little difference in the scores for the vowel + suffix forms and the suppletive forms for the 1-3 LOR group (44.5% and 44.0%), and between the internal vowel change forms and those which use the vowel + suffix forms (31.8% and 29.8%) for the 4-7 LOR group.

In examining Figure 3.9, we see that there is some individual variation when these same tabulations are broken down by age level. In the 1-3 LOR group, three out of the four age levels had a higher incidence of unmarked tense for the suppletive forms than for the vowel + suffix forms. However, the mean

1–3 Years in US

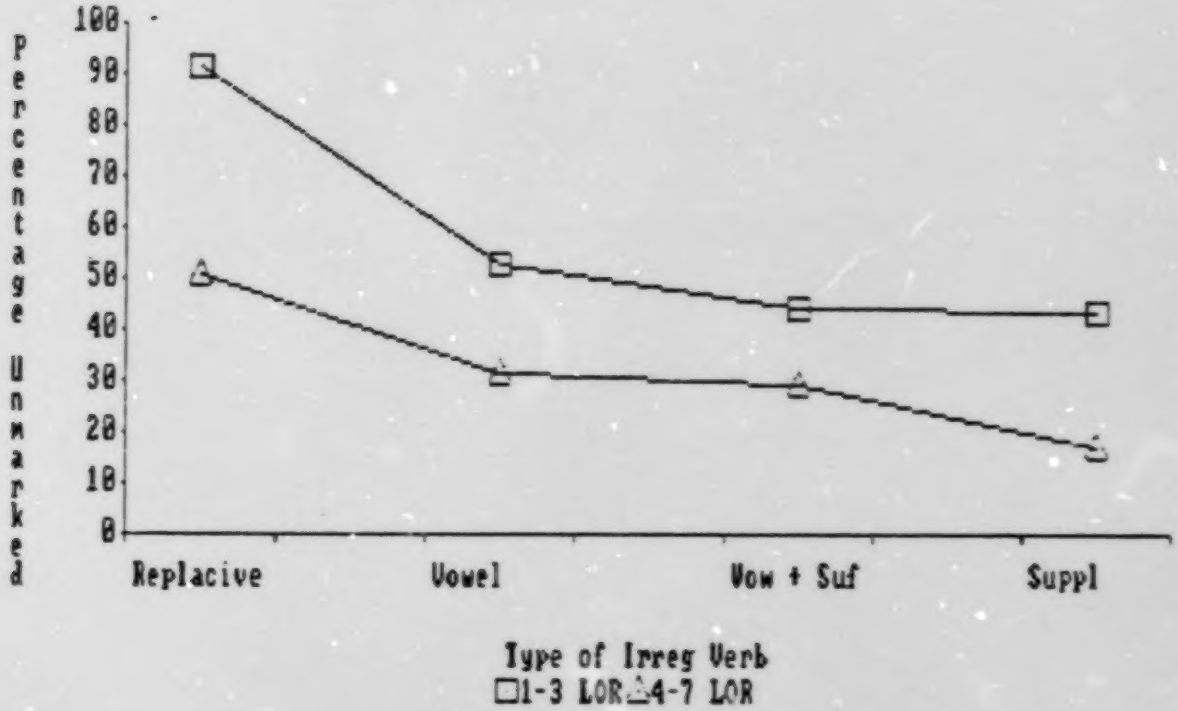
| Age | Sex | Subj | Replacive | | | Suff/Vowel | | | Vowel | | | Suppletive | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Um/T | % | Age Group % | Um/T | % | Age Group % | Um/T | % | Age Group % | Um/T | % | Age Group % |
| 10–12 | M | 11 | 3/3 | 100.0 | 95.3 | 21/35 | 60.0 | 52.4 | 43/58 | 74.1 | 73.4 | 29/31 | 93.5 | 40.0 |
| | | 16 | 29/32 | 90.6 | | 40/92 | 43.5 | | 61/74 | 82.4 | | 45/99 | 45.5 | |
| | F | 33 | 38/42 | 90.5 | | 50/88 | 56.8 | | 76/107 | 71.0 | | 4/87 | 4.6 | |
| | | 34 | 23/23 | 100.0 | | 42/85 | 49.4 | | 60/91 | 65.9 | | 16/99 | 16.2 | |
| 15–18 | M | 37 | 21/24 | 87.5 | 92.1 | 21/51 | 41.2 | 39.2 | 30/46 | 65.2 | 35.5 | 45/53 | 84.9 | 58.4 |
| | | 84 | 30/32 | 93.8 | | 31/75 | 41.3 | | 38/138 | 27.5 | | 13/30 | 43.3 | |
| | F | 39 | 38/39 | 97.4 | | 31/128 | 24.2 | | 24/99 | 24.3 | | 30/36 | 83.3 | |
| | | 47 | 17/19 | 89.5 | | 14/28 | 50.0 | | 6/24 | 25.0 | | 4/18 | 22.2 | |
| 20–26 | M | 27 | 20/23 | 87.0 | 93.2 | 26/53 | 49.1 | 54.9 | 40/57 | 70.2 | 59.3 | 30/45 | 66.7 | 66.3 |
| | | 58 | 60/64 | 93.8 | | 21/55 | 38.2 | | 31/72 | 43.1 | | 12/19 | 63.2 | |
| | F | 83 | 23/25 | 92.0 | | 26/45 | 57.8 | | 24/57 | 42.1 | | 13/23 | 56.5 | |
| | | 87 | 19/19 | 100.0 | | 32/43 | 74.4 | | 36/44 | 81.8 | | 13/15 | 86.7 | |
| 35–55 | M | 24 | 2/2 | 100.0 | 81.4 | 0/3 | 00.0 | 32.9 | 6/6 | 100.0 | 54.7 | 6/12 | 50.0 | 43.0 |
| | | 73 | 2/3 | 66.7 | | 2/3 | 66.7 | | 4/7 | 57.1 | | 9/15 | 60.0 | |
| | F | 91 | 21/24 | 87.5 | | 2/26 | 7.7 | | 11/30 | 36.7 | | 7/46 | 15.2 | |
| | | 93 | 5/7 | 71.4 | | 8/14 | 57.1 | | 5/20 | 25.0 | | 7/15 | 46.7 | |
| Total | | | 351/381 | 92.1 | | 367/824 | 44.5 | | 495/930 | 53.2 | | 283/643 | 44.0 | |

4–7 Years in US

| Age | Sex | Subj | Replacive | | | Suff/Vowel | | | Vowel | | | Suppletive | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Um/T | % | Age Group % | Um/T | % | Age Group % | Um/T | % | Age Group % | Um/T | % | Age Group % |
| 10–12 | M | 19 | 1/14 | 7.1 | 24.2 | 5/48 | 10.4 | 9.6 | 6/65 | 9.3 | 8.1 | 2/116 | 1.7 | 2.1 |
| | | 92 | 4/8 | 50.0 | | 1/22 | 4.5 | | 1/66 | 1.5 | | 1/41 | 2.4 | |
| | F | 42 | 1/16 | 6.3 | | 8/41 | 19.5 | | 2/12 | 16.7 | | 1/62 | 1.6 | |
| | | 57 | 2/6 | 33.3 | | 1/24 | 4.1 | | 1/21 | 4.8 | | 1/37 | 2.7 | |
| 15–18 | M | 29 | 10/27 | 37.0 | 38.0 | 1/24 | 4.2 | 13.6 | 4/31 | 12.9 | 24.8 | 3/74 | 4.1 | 8.5 |
| | | 43 | 7/37 | 18.9 | | 4/25 | 16.0 | | 8/42 | 19.0 | | 4/107 | 3.7 | |
| | F | 50 | 2/4 | 50.0 | | 1/16 | 6.3 | | 7/16 | 43.8 | | 3/19 | 15.8 | |
| | | 51 | 12/26 | 46.1 | | 15/54 | 27.8 | | 7/30 | 23.3 | | 5/49 | 10.2 | |
| 20–26 | M | 77 | 15/18 | 83.3 | 83.8 | 7/31 | 22.6 | 39.5 | 10/29 | 34.5 | 33.2 | 11/50 | 22.0 | 33.0 |
| | | 89 | 10/17 | 58.8 | | 4/14 | 28.6 | | 7/16 | 43.8 | | 13/56 | 23.2 | |
| | F | 65 | 6/6 | 100.0 | | 8/15 | 53.3 | | 4/14 | 28.6 | | 8/15 | 53.3 | |
| | | 76 | 13/14 | 92.9 | | 40/75 | 53.3 | | 17/66 | 25.8 | | 12/36 | 33.3 | |
| 35–55 | M | 74 | 4/5 | 80.0 | 76.7 | 2/7 | 28.6 | 35.3 | 9/32 | 28.1 | 56.7 | 17/34 | 50.0 | 57.7 |
| | | 79 | 5/6 | 83.3 | | 0/7 | 00.0 | | 3/14 | 21.4 | | 0/5 | 00.0 | |
| | F | 32 | 10/20 | 50.0 | | 22/33 | 66.7 | | 44/48 | 91.7 | | 12/12 | 100.0 | |
| | | 78 | 29/31 | 93.5 | | 32/70 | 45.7 | | 47/55 | 85.5 | | 38/47 | 80.9 | |
| Total | | | 131/255 | 51.4 | | 151/506 | 29.8 | | 177/557 | 31.8 | | 131/760 | 17.2 | |

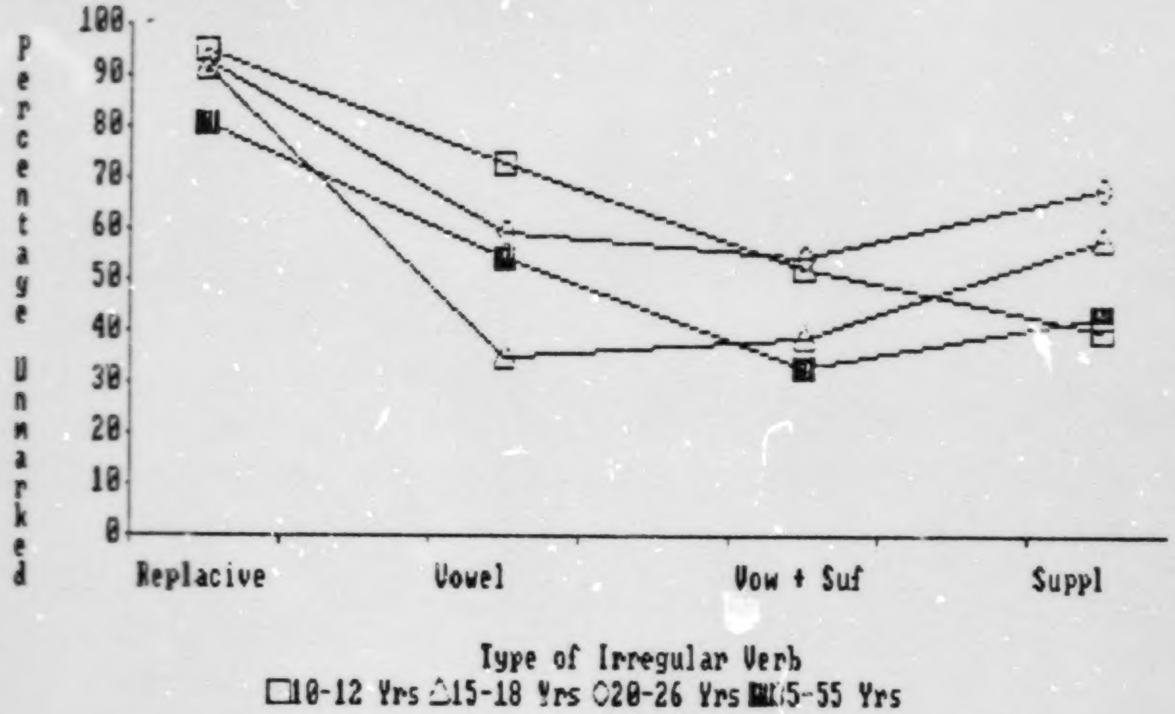
Table 3.12. Incidence of Unmarked Tense for Four Categories of Irregular Verbs

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

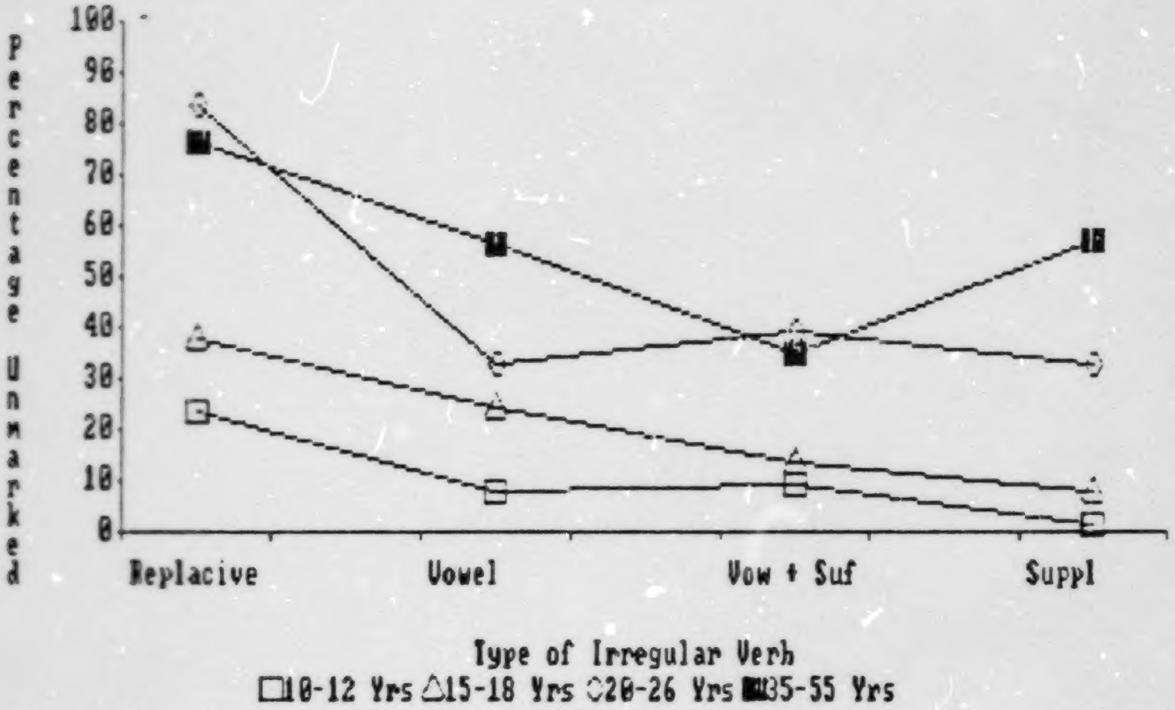


| Type of Irreg. Verb | Residency |  |  |  |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | 1-3 LOR |  | 4-7 LOR |  |
|  | Unm/T | % | Unm/T | % |
| Replacive | 351/381 | 92.1 | 131/255 | 51.4 |
| Int. Vowel | 495/930 | 53.2 | 177/557 | 31.8 |
| Vowel + Suffix | 367/824 | 44.5 | 151/506 | 29.8 |
| Suppletive | 283/643 | 44.0 | 131/760 | 17.2 |

Figure 3.8. Unmarked Tense for the Four Categories of Irregular Verbs, by Length of Residency



1-3 LOR



4-7 LOR

Figure 3.9. Unmarked Tense for the Four Categories of Irregular Verbs, by Length of Residency and Age

scores (for all 16 subjects) for suppletives and vowel plus suffix forms were almost identical. This is due to the fact that the 10-12 year group (the only group which had a lower incidence of unmarked tense for suppletives than for the vowel + suffix forms) had many more possible occurrences of suppletives than did any of the other three age groups, along with a low percentage of unmarked tense for suppletives, which lowered the mean score. The four subjects in this age group (10-12) had a total score of 316 possible occurrences out of 643 for the whole group.

Finally, in the 1-3 LOR group there is a high degree of variation among the age groups, by type of verb. However, in the 4-7 LOR group the 10-12 year group had the least unmarking for all types of irregular, the 15-18 year group had the next least unmarking, and the other two age groups overlap for the categories of irregular verbs.

Based on these tabulations we conclude that there is a tendency for the most phonetically divergent forms to be marked most often, and the least divergent forms to be marked the least often; however, this pattern is not without variation.

In our preliminary investigation, we suggested that there may be a constraint related to "high frequency" verbs. That is, frequently used verbs are more likely to be marked than low usage verbs. The verbs we examined earlier were all high-usage verbs. In Table 3.13 we have listed the new totals and percentages, for all 32 subjects. This table differentiates the high usage verbs tabulated previously with other verbs. We have not listed suppletives because be and go are essentially the only verbs in the suppletive category, and they were both in our list of frequently used verbs. We have compared the tabulations for have versus other replacives, come versus other internal vowel change forms, and do versus other internal vowel + suffix forms. Tabulations

|  | Replacives (F=have) |  | Vowel (F=come) |  | Vowel + Suffix (F=do) |  |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | No. Um/T | % | No. Um/T | % | No. Um/T | % |
| 1-3 Years: |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Frequent | 299/322 | 92.9 | 109/306 | 35.6 | 119/337 | 35.3 |
| Other | 52/59 | 88.1 | 386/624 | 61.9 | 248/487 | 50.9 |
| 4-7 Years: |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Frequent | 111/227 | 48.9 | 62/151 | 41.0 | 67/215 | 31.2 |
| Other | 20/28 | 71.4 | 115/406 | 28.3 | 84/291 | 28.9 |

Table 3.13. Incidence of Unmarked Tense for Frequent Irregular Verbs Versus Others, by Irregular Type and Length of Residency

and percentages are given by length of residency. In the data for the first 16 subjects only one out of these six cells showed a higher percentage of unmarked tense for a frequent verb versus the others in the same subtype (do for the 4-7 LOR group). It thus appears that there is frequency constraint. However, in Table 3.13 we see that in three out of the six cells there is more unmarking on a frequent form than the others in the category. For two of these cells (have - 1-3 LOR group; do - 4-7 LOR group) the differences are slight (92.9% versus 88.1%; 31.2% versus 28.9%, respectively). The third cell with more unmarking on the frequent verb is the one with come in the 4-7 LOR group. Tense marking is not just a function of type of irregular verb, but is to some degree affected by frequency of use.

The final category which we examine here contains the modals will and can. In Table 3.14 the tabulations for each subject are shown, with summary tabulations and percentages for both will and can. For both LOR groups will is marked for past tense more often that can is (59.0% versus 90.8% - 1-3 LOR group; 3.3% versus 64.1% - 4-7 LOR group).

| | | Residency | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1-3 Years | | | | | 4-7 Years | | | | |
| Age | Sex | Subj | Can | Will | Total | % Um | Subj | Can | Will | Total | % Um |
| 10-12 | M | 11 | 1/1 | - | 1/1 | 100.0 | 19 | 0/4 | 0/2 | 0/6 | 0.0 |
| | | 16 | 10/12 | 0/4 | 10/16 | 62.5 | 92 | 2/3 | - | 2/3 | 66.7 |
| | F | 33 | 13/17 | 0/3 | 13/20 | 65.0 | 42 | 0/6 | 1/3 | 1/9 | 11.1 |
| | | 34 | 10/10 | - | 10/10 | 100.0 | 57 | 2/3 | 0/1 | 2/4 | 50.0 |
| 15-18 | M | 37 | 3/3 | 3/3 | 6/6 | 100.0 | 29 | 2/4 | 0/12 | 2/16 | 12.5 |
| | | 84 | 5/5 | 3/3 | 8/8 | 100.0 | 43 | 2/3 | 0/8 | 2/11 | 18.2 |
| | F | 39 | 20/20 | 8/11 | 28/31 | 90.3 | 50 | 1/1 | 0/1 | 1/2 | 50.0 |
| | | 47 | 1/6 | 1/2 | 2/8 | 25.0 | 51 | 0/2 | 0/3 | 0/5 | 00.0 |
| 20-26 | M | 27 | 22/22 | 5/10 | 27/32 | 84.4 | 77 | 11/11 | - | 11/11 | 100.0 |
| | | 58 | 2/2 | - | 2/2 | 100.0 | 89 | 1/1 | 0/2 | 1/3 | 33.3 |
| | F | 83 | 8/8 | 2/2 | 10/10 | 100.0 | 65 | - | - | - | - |
| | | 87 | 4/4 | - | 4/4 | 100.0 | 76 | 6/6 | 0/1 | 6/7 | 85.7 |
| 35-55 | M | 24 | - | - | - | - | 74 | 4/9 | - | 4/9 | 44.4 |
| | | 73 | 2/2 | - | 2/2 | 100.0 | 79 | 2/2 | - | 2/2 | 100.0 |
| | F | 91 | 6/6 | 1/1 | 7/7 | 100.0 | 32 | 17/17 | 1/1 | 18/18 | 100.0 |
| | | 93 | 1/1 | - | 1/1 | 100.0 | 78 | 0/6 | 1/2 | 1/8 | 12.5 |
| Total | | | 108/119 | 23/39 | 131/158 | 82.9 | | 50/78 | 3/36 | 53/114 | 46.5 |
| % | | | 90.9 | 59.0 | | | | 64.1 | 8.3 | | |

Table 3.14. Unmarked Tense for Modals *will* and *can*, by Age and Length of Residency

The percentages for all of our categories of verbs in summary forms are presented in Figure 3.10. The same order of percentage of unmarking by category of verb which we found for the first 16 subjects is maintained for our more representative sample. As we noted previously, modals are in the category of irregular verbs which use vowel + suffix to mark for past tense. However, they fall between the replacives and an internal vowel change in the descending order of unmarking. Only regular verbs and replacives are marked less frequently for past than the modals. However, it should be noted that in terms of lexical items, can had a much higher rate of unmarking than did will, and this may be further evidence for a type of lexical constraint.

## Hyper-Forms of Tense Marking

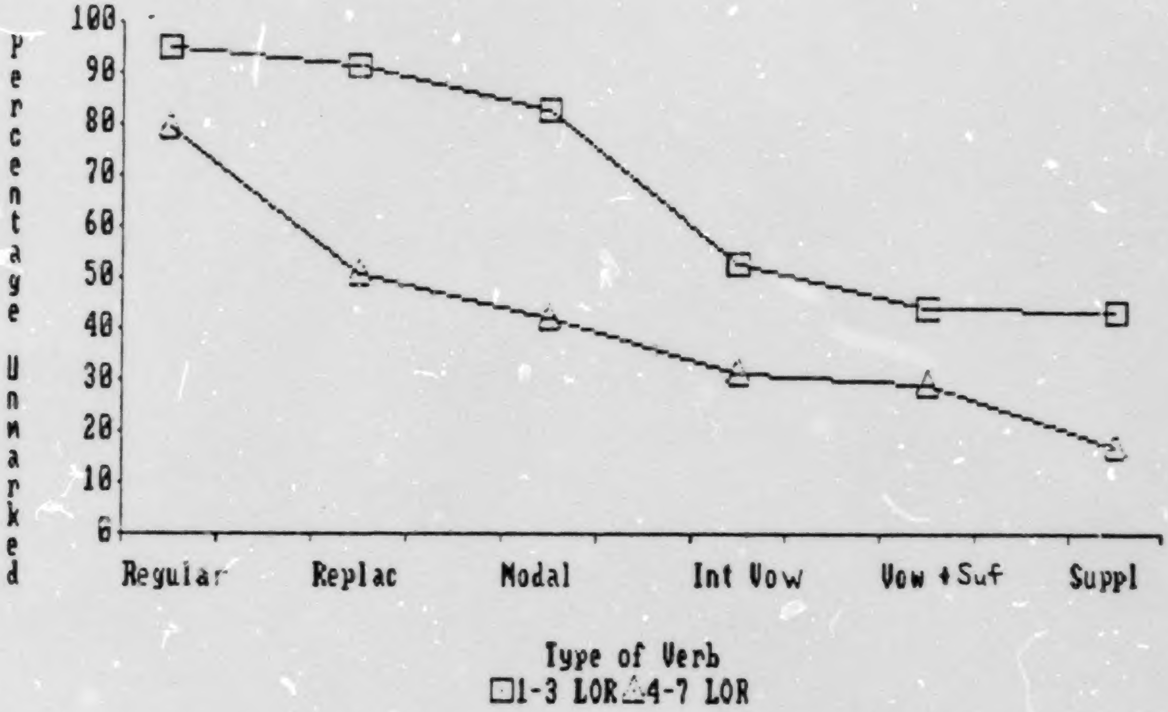
There were several linguistic environments in our data in which the application of past tense marking extended beyond the boundaries of its usage in mainstream dialects of English. We refer to these forms in which overextension of past tense marking occurs as hyper-forms (cf. Chapter Five).

The first type of hyper-form we have found is pleonastic tense marking, in which tense marking is generalized to both the auxiliary and the verb phrase. In standard English usage tense marking occurs either on the verb (if no auxiliary is present) or on the first auxiliary in the verb phrase. Most occurrences of this type of overextension of tense marking involved the auxiliary did/didn't. Examples of this type of marking from our corpus are as follows:

(F=Fieldworker; S=Subject)

(1) F: Is it flat, is it mountainous?
S: It's flat land but the rock, the road they didn't made it very flat. (16:9)

(2) And then they lived there for almost three years and I didn't came to school, ______ go to school. (84:1)



| | Residency | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1-3 LOR | | 4-7 LOR | |
| | Unm/T | % | Unm/T | % |
| Regular | 777/818 | 95.0 | 464/584 | 79.5 |
| Replacive | 351/381 | 92.1 | 131/255 | 51.4 |
| Modal | 131/158 | 82.9 | 53/124 | 42.7 |
| Int. Vowel | 495/930 | 53.2 | 177/557 | 31.8 |
| Vowel + Suffix | 367/824 | 44.5 | 151/506 | 29.8 |
| Suppletive | 283/643 | 44.0 | 131/760 | 17.2 |

Figure 3.10. Unmarked Tense, by Verb Type and by Length of Residency

A form of regularization of tense marking is another type of pleonastic marking which was revealed in our data. It involves the use of a regular past tense suffix on an irregular verb already marked for past tense. For a subset of 16 of our subjects, this type of regularization occurred only one time.

(3) ...but I lowere(d) it down so that she hit there, and it broked in half. (16:12)

Another type of overextension of past tense marking is the use of a past tense form on the verb in a complement sentence. In standard English the base form of the verb is used and tense is not marked. This type of hyper-form did not often appear in the data, but some examples are:

(4) I don't know. My mom just told me to went in the boat and we just go to America. (65:9)

(5) And, well, they finally found out to caught them, caught them. (19:29)

(6) She don't want to left him, you know, to leave him. (39:17)

The final type of hyper-tense marking which we discuss is the use of a past tense form in a context which requires the present tense form of the verb. The use of a past tense form in generic, habitual or non-past tense contexts occurred often in our data. Some examples are:

(7) F: What does she tell you?
S: Uh, she tell you is write a lot of letter to her and uh told her about everything in this school and tell her about everything you go in holiday... (11:5)

(8) F: Do you go inside of Washington DC?
S: Yeah.
F: What do you do in there?
S: Go you know like buy something. Like some time when we ran out of things we go to DC and buy it. (16:22)

(9) F: Do you see them much?
S: Yeah, sometime we saw. Yeah, they like. (32:15)

(10) Sometime my dictionary didn't have some new word, yeah. (37:6)

(11) F: Very far from here, do you have to go?
S: Took me about fifteen minutes. (65:1)

(12) F: Did she have the same paper to sign?
S: No, she didn't sign it.
F: Why?
S: Because she didn't know much about Vietnamese. (16:2)

(13) We eats it every day so you know we didn't really like it now. (16:13)

We speculate that the overextension of tense marking in these examples is related to the particular lexical items used. Almost all of the cases of this type of hyper-tense marking involved irregular verbs. One of our subjects had 43 cases of the use of past tense forms of irregular verbs when present tense forms were required in standard English. Of those 43 cases, only 5 verbs were used (took - 1 example; came - 21 examples; thought - 13 examples; left - 2 examples; didn't - 6 examples). This pattern of overextension of particular irregular verbs occurred for other subjects as well. It may be that as a result of an emphasis on rote memorization of the past tense forms of irregular verbs, these forms are used in contexts where their non-past counterpart is required in mainstream English.

## Regularization

Regularization of tense marking, that is, use of the regular past tense suffix on an irregular verb in its non-past form, occurred only five times in the speech data of a subset of 16 subjects. The five examples are goed, gived, maked, and teached (used twice). Regularization of tense marking on irregular verbs (marked and unmarked) is a process that is not very productive in the speech of these subjects.

## Self-Corrections of Tense Marking

Many of our subjects had some examples of self-corrections of tense marking. This self-correction occurred in several ways: (1) changing a form unmarked for tense to a marked form, (2) changing a hyper-tensed form to a present tense form, and (3) changing a present tense form to a hyper-tensed form. The first two types of changes result in the correct form, while the third type results in a form which is hyper-tensed. Examples are as follows:

### Unmarked to marked

(14) ...and it doesn't didn't work. (16:21)

(15) I cannot I could not line up, line up. (32:4)

### Hyper-tensed to present tense

(17) F: What do you teach them?
S: I taught I teach them that... (32:21)

(18) F: Do you think you would go back to Vietnam if you could?
Would you like to go back to live there or to visit?
S: I hope that we could, we can. I hope we can. (32:19)

### Present tense to hyper-tensed

(16) My uncle, my sister, and anything I don't have I didn't have
because they still in Vietnam. (37:14)

In these examples, and in others in our data, particular verbs occur more often than others, as was the case with overextension of past tense marking to present tense contexts. The occurrence of self-corrections demonstrates that speakers are in the process of acquiring the tense marking patterns of English, and are aware of some of the factors which trigger past and present tense marking.

## Conclusion

In this chapter we have discussed a variety of factors which operate as constraints on tense marking. Included in these factors are the regular versus irregular verb distinction, type of irregular verb, type of past tense suffix on regular verbs, following phonological environment, frequency of use of some irregular verbs, and phonetic distance between base and past tense forms. In addition to these linguistic factors, there are social factors which have a role in determining patterns of tense marking. There is evidence that age, amount of time spent in the United States, and gender influence these patterns. In addition to these factors operating independently, the processes may converge (e.g. grammatical and phonological processes operating on regular verbs), or there may be an interaction effect of these processes (e.g. in the 4-7 LOR group age sometimes made a difference, when it had no influence in the 1-3 LOR group).

We have demonstrated that analysis of the systematic variability of tense marking is necessarily complex, and requires the examination of many factors as possible constraints. Other features which may effect tense unmarking (e.g., discourse level constraints) will be discussed in later chapters. However, the importance of a thorough investigation of surface level constraints should be clear from the above discussion.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# ANALYSIS OF SPOKEN LANGUAGE NARRATIVES

## Introduction

In the previous two chapters we have examined tense marking in the spoken language data collected in the Vietnamese community in Northern Virginia. In this chapter we analyze tense marking in two narratives extracted from the oral interviews done with two of our subjects.

In our analysis in Chapters Two and Three we have primarily examined lower-level constraints (phonological and grammatical) on tense marking. We have not attempted to determine in any detail whether or not type of genre or other discourse-level features are constraints on tense marking. However, in recent years researchers have been applying discourse analysis methods to second language acquisition data, and several authors have suggested primary discourse constraints governing tense marking patterns in second language acquisition data. In each of their studies the focus is upon higher-level discourse constraints, but there is no extensive consideration of lower-level phenomena in the analysis, such as phonological or morphological form. In this study we propose that lower-level constraints cannot be ignored in the analysis of tense marking in second language acquisition data. We first briefly summarize three discourse studies, and then apply the methods of analysis suggested in them to the two representative narratives from our corpus. The lower-level characteristics of the data are also discussed, with reference to our findings presented in Chapters Two and Three.

## Discourse Studies of Tense

In one important study, Godfrey (1980) examined tense marking in the speech data of 20 adult ESL students, in both narrative and non-narrative tasks, from a discourse-level perspective. An error in tense marking was judged to have occurred when the tense continuity was not maintained. He defines a "tense continuity" as "the realization of a temporary tense constraint in verbs with corresponding tense" (Godfrey 1980:94). It is initiated by the first use of a tense representing a particular temporal reference central to a topic, and continues until the topic is exhausted. When errors in tense marking were scored in relation to these tense continuities, Godfrey found that the "error rates" (in formation and use of a element related to tense) were higher for speakers at more advanced levels of proficiency than at lower levels. This finding contradicted the expectation that speakers at a more advanced level of proficiency have lower error rates than those at a less advanced level. He suggested that there are a number of reasons for this deviation in expected error rates. Among these reasons are: avoidance of verb marking (which in his analysis would mean that a past tense constraint had not been initiated); a speaker's lack of awareness of morphological tense marking; attention limitations (causing a speaker to switch, for example, from past to present tense forms); types of topic continuity established; and degree of difficulty in maintaining a particular continuity (e.g. present or past tense). If a speaker avoids tense marking on any verbs, or is not aware of tense marking and therefore does not attempt its use, by Godfrey's definition no breaks in tense continuity occur. If a speaker has difficulty in attending to tense marking, there may be many breaks in tense continuity due to the alternation of past and present tense forms. When one of these factors influences speech, the error rate for a speaker could be higher or lower than expected given his or her level of proficiency, which would result in deviations in expected error rates. Godfrey's method of analyzing tense marking, then, is to examine fluctuations of past and present tense forms within a section of discourse in which a particular tense continuity should be in effect (by his definition). The fluctuations are scored as errors.

In the second article, Wolfson (1982) discusses the need for researchers who are examining non-native speaker data to incorporate in their analysis what is known about tense usage in native speaker narratives, particularly in reference to the conversational historical present tense (CHP). The CHP is the use of a present tense form when a past event is being narrated. Wolfson criticizes Godfrey's analysis of discourse constraints on tense continuity because he, following Chafe (1972), assumed that while the temporal reference remains the same, discourse constraints in English require the speaker to use the same tense throughout a narration. She accuses Godfrey of confusing tense continuity with temporal reference, because he stated that a tense, once it is used, will represent a particular temporal reference until the topic it is associated with is exhausted. This assumes that a speaker must continue to use the same tense throughout a narration if the temporal reference remains the same. In contrast, Wolfson (1978, 1979) and others (e.g. Schiffrin 1981) have shown that native English speakers sometimes alternate between the historical present and simple past in narratives. This alternation between tenses occurs even when the temporal reference (e.g. a past event) remains the same. Wolfson has also demonstrated that native speakers use this alternation to organize a narrative, by separating the episodes in a story from one another. She suggests that instead of making errors in their narratives, Godfrey's speakers "may have attained a high degree of control over the use of the historical present tense", and may have been using it at episode boundaries, which is where Godfrey found many of the "errors" as he analyzed them to have occurred. Her main point is that we must know how native speakers use the features we are investigating, in order to do a valid analysis of non-native speaker usage, "recognizing that discourse rules apply differently to different genres." (Wolfson 1982:68)

In the third article, Kumpf (1984) examines temporal systems in interlanguage. She utilized a "discourse-functional" approach to interlanguage analysis in which the forms used in the data were indexed to a particular context in the discourse. Her goal was to be able to approach interlanguage as systematic in and of itself. One assumption was that in interlanguage discourse, speakers control a range of possible structures in a given context and "choose" which ones to present (e.g. past and present tense forms). Analyzing tense marking in narratives of a Japanese woman who had acquired English in an untutored situation, Kumpf coded the discourse structures mainly by dividing them into foreground and background clauses. She then showed how they correlated with characteristics such as aspect, verb types (e.g. active and stative), verb forms, and clause types. From her analysis she concluded that in this speaker's interlanguage system, tense marking is not employed when referring to completed action, but it is used to refer to states and to non-completed action. Some of the categories and methods Kumpf used will be explored in greater detail below.

As mentioned above, these researchers approach second language or interlanguage data from different perspectives. Godfrey and Wolfson approach it as an approximation of the target language, and therefore they discuss "errors" made by the non-native speaker. They differ, however, in their analysis of tense marking behavior by native English speakers. Kumpf, on the other hand, approaches interlanguage as a system which does not necessarily match the first or the second language. Differing uses of tense marking are attributed to the system of the interlanguage, and function within that system, although they may function in other ways within the second language. In the data examined in this report, tense marking (i.e. whether or not a form is marked for past tense) is analyzed according to whether or not a native speaker of a mainstream dialect of English would be expected to use a past tense form in a particular instance or not. We do not reject interlanguage structuring apart from $L_2$ norms, but view the $L_2$ target system as an inevitable norm of reference in the language learning situation.

## Narrative Analysis

The first narrative we examine is presented in Table 4.1. It was extracted from an interview done with a fifteen-year old male who had been in the United States for two years at the time of the interview (Subject # 84). The narrative is arranged by clauses. When analyzing the clause structure of the narratives, we attempted to follow Kumpf's classification system, by dividing narratives into foreground and background clauses. She described foreground clauses as those which push the event line forward, that is, they tell what happens next, and remain in the same time frame for the entire episode or story. Background clauses she defined as those which elaborate on the event line and do not push it forward. In Table 4.1 foreground clauses are given in the left column, background clauses in the middle column, and other speech segments (interjections, phrases, etc.) in the third column. All of the clauses in the first and second columns have verbs which could take past tense marking. Those which require past tense marking by native speakers (ignoring at this time the historical present tense) are underscored and designated as 0 for no past tense marking, 1 for past tense marking, and NT when no tabulation was made. Some verb occurrences were not tabulated for presence or absence of past tense marking because of reliability factors (i.e. the rater could not discern absence or presence of marking due to phonological reasons, could not hear a segment, or time reference was ambiguous). The codes for these categories appear in two columns to the right of the narrative. The third column to the right of the narrative codes the verbs in the foreground and background clauses as to whether

Table 4.1. Narrative, by Clause Type, Verb Form, and Tense Marking, Subject # 84

1 = marked for past tense
0 = unmarked for past tense
h.f. = hyper-form
N.T. = no tabulation (for various reasons)
F = foreground
B = background
Inv = invariant

| Foreground | Background | Other | Foreground/ Background F/B | Tense Marking 0/1/NT | Verb Form R/I |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | (F: What do you remember about where you lived and stuff? What was it like where you were living?) | - | - | - |
| | Before I lived in Saigon. | | B | 1 | R |
| | | The main capital of Vietnam. | - | - | - |
| And, after 1975, and uh the Vietnamese Communist they came to you know | | | F | 1 | I |
| took South Vietnam. | | | F | 1 | I |
| And then I came back to the farm of my grandmother. | | | F | 1 | I |
| And I live(d) there for almost one year. | | | F | NT | R |
| And, they continue to, | | | F | 0 | R |
| | you know, because my uncles and my fathers, they were the Vietnamese soldier. | | B | 1 | I |
| And then, they search// for my father and my uncles. | | | F | 0 | R |
| | 'Cause my uncles was the soldier for American. | | B | 1 | I |
| And then we left that city, | | | F | 1 | I |
| we came down to the city, | | | F | 1 | I |
| | that's its name, | | B | NT | I |
| | | a small city name ________ | - | - | - |
| And then I live(d) there for almost three years. | | | F | NT | R |
| | And I didn't came to school. | | B | 1 | I |
| | | ________ go to school. | - | - | - |
| | I have to help my parents with the work on the farm | | B | 0 | I |
| | | and to grow the rice, | - | - | - |
| | | something like that, | - | - | - |
| | and, we live(d) there for almost three years | | B | NT | R |
| | and have some problem, | | B | 0 | I |
| | because they still search for my father. | | B | 0 | R |
| | And we have to find a way to escape from the Vietnamese Communist. | | B | 0 | I |
| | But we don't have the money. | | B | 0 | I |
| | And, // uh my father uh, he has to contact with my grandfather. | | B | 0 | I |
| | Because my grandfather have the boat. | | B | 0 | I |
| | And he was the fishing. | | B | 1 | I |
| On the way he search for the way to escape from Vietnamese Communist, | | | F | 0 | R |
| and my uncle was caught by the Vietnamese Communist, | | | F | 1 | I |
| | | for three months. | - | - | - |
| And after they, you know, give my uncle freedom. | | | F | 0 | I |
| And we find a way to leave the, Vietnam, to came to another country | | | F | 0 | I |
| | have the freedom, you know. | | B | NT | I |
| | We find the freedom. | | B | 0 | I |
| And, on the way we left Vietnam with 72 people on the boat with 10 meters. | | | F | 1 | I |
| | | 10 meters. | - | - | - |
| | the long is 10 meters | | B | 0 | I |
| | and the wide is | | B | 0 | I |
| | I thought maybe two and a half meters. | | B | h.f. | I |
| | | With 72 people, | - | - | - |
| | and just all the people in my family is 32 people. | | B | NT | I |
| | | With 40 people | - | - | - |
| | | you know, | - | - | - |
| they saw us to escape | | | F | 1 | I |
| and then they follow us | | | F | 0 | R |
| | If we uh won't let them go with us | | B | 0 | I |
| | they will tell with the Vietnamese Communist to come to catch us. | | B | 0 | I |
| | | (F: Oh, so you have to take them with you then?) | - | - | - |
| | | Uh-huh | - | - | - |

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

| Foreground | Background | Other | F/B | 0/1/NT | R/I |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | And for five days and five nights on the sea, we don't have enough water to drink, |  | B | 0 | I |
|  |  | food to eat. | - | - | - |
| After, five days and five nights we saw the boat of the thiefs Thailand. |  |  | F | 1 | I |
| And they come to us |  |  | F | 0 | I |
|  | and we didn't know |  | B | 1 | I |
|  | that is a thiefs |  | B | 0 | I |
|  | We didn't know that. |  | B | 1 | I |
| And, after they help us to get on their boat |  |  | F | 0 | R |
| and after one or two hours, they give us food to eat |  |  | F | 0 | I |
| and after that they search for gold. |  |  | F | 0 | R |
|  |  | Yeah, | - | - | - |
| and, they take all of the gold |  |  | F | 0 | I |
|  | of the people go in my boat, |  | B | 0 | I |
| and they show us the way to go to Malaysia. |  |  | F | 0 | R |
| And we went to Malaysia for around, one day and one night, |  |  | F | 1 | I |
| and we came to Malaysia. |  |  | F | 1 | I |
| We saw the island. |  |  | F | 1 | I |
|  | It's too many, too many people there. |  | B | 0 | I |
|  |  | About, | - | - | - |
|  | I thought, |  | B | h.f. | I |
|  |  | 42000 people | - | - | - |
|  |  | On the, on the island, about one-and-half miles. | - | - | - |
| And we saw very crowded people there. |  |  | F | 1 | I |
| And we get there, |  |  | F | 0 | I |
| and we live(d) there. |  |  | F | NT | R |
|  | We don't have food, |  | B | 0 | I |
|  |  | enough food to eat. | - | - | - |
|  | Everyday we have to go up to the forest, |  | B | 0 | I |
|  |  | to cut down the tree | - | - | - |
|  |  | to make the tent | - | - | - |
|  |  | to live there | - | - | - |
|  |  | Almost a year. | - | - | - |
|  |  | (F: Uh-huh. In Malaysia?) | - | - | - |
|  |  | Yeah, in Malaysia, | - | - | - |
|  |  | in the island, | - | - | - |
|  | it's almost a year. |  | B | 0 | I |
|  | We have the organization of American |  | B | 0 | I |
| they come to, you know, ask us about something in Vietnam |  |  | F | 0 | I |
|  | and was my father |  | NT | NT | NT |
|  | was In Vietnam, |  | B | 1 | I |
| and my father tell him |  |  | F | 0 | I |
|  | he was a soldier, |  | B | 1 | I |
|  |  | something like that. | - | - | - |
| They let us, |  |  | F | NT | Inv |
|  |  | you know, | - | - | - |
|  |  | to left Malaysia | - | h.f. | I |
|  |  | to came to, | - | h.f. | I |
|  |  | you know, | - | - | - |
| left the island |  |  | F | 1 | I |
| came to the main capital of Malaysia |  |  | F | 1 | I |
|  | is Kuala Lumpur. |  | B | NT | NT |

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

| Foreground | Background | Other | F/B | 0/1/NT | R/I |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| And we live(d) there for, about three or four months. | | | F | NT | R |
| | | You know, | - | - | - |
| we got to travel | | | F | 1 | I |
| | because my uncles, he went to Switzerland | | B | 1 | I |
| | and he sponsor my family to go to Switzerland | | B | 0 | R |
| | | and after that, | - | - | - |
| | | and between America and Switzerland, | - | - | - |
| | I don't know | | B | NT | I |
| | what's wrong with them, | | B | 0 | I |
| they put all of the Switzerland | | | F | NT | Inv |
| | that my father want to go to in Switzerland and American, | | B | 0 | R |
| and they ask my father | | | F | 0 | R |
| | why my father don't want to go to America. | | B | 0 | I |
| | Why he want to go to Switzerland. | | B | 0 | R |
| And my father says | | | F | 0 | I |
| | "because we have the relative in Switzerland | | B | - | - |
| | and we want to live together," | | B | - | - |
| | | or something like that. | - | - | - |
| They says the Switzerland | | | F | 0 | I |
| | they cannot come to the concentration camp to ask us about that, | | B | 0 | I |
| and we live(d) there three months | | | F | NT | R |
| and the American people they call us to come up there and then, | | | F | 0 | R |
| they says | | | F | 0 | I |
| | now if my father want to go to America right, | | B | 0 | R |
| | they will let us go, | | B | 0 | I |
| | because the organization of Switzerland, they not accept us to go to Switzerland. | | B | NT | - |
| Then we came here, right. | | | F | 1 | I |
| We came here. | | | F | 1 | I |

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

they are regular or irregular forms.

Before the narratives are discussed in detail, we need to explain Kumpf's analysis of the verbs used in foreground and background clauses more thoroughly. In her analysis of narratives, Kumpf categorized the various forms of the verbs as either base form (combining both regular and irregular verbs), irregular past form, verb + ed, etc. Because she combined the base forms of both irregular and regular verbs into one category, we are unable to determine from her discussion what percentage of regular verbs and what percentage of irregular verbs were unmarked for past.

According to Kumpf's analysis, 78 percent of the foreground clauses used the base form of the verb, and 15 percent contained the irregular past forms. However, she speculated that these irregulars may be learned as separate items, since their nonpast counterparts did not appear in the data. From these observations, she concluded that completed action in the foreground was expressed with the base form. In the background clauses almost 60 percent of the stative verbs used were tensed, including three examples of regular verbs. Kumpf stated that this use of three regular verbs marked for tense demonstrated that the "verb + ed" form was known to the speaker. Her claim was that the speaker distinguished between foreground and background clauses, since only base forms of regular verbs were used in the foreground clauses, whereas the past tense forms occurred in the background clauses. However, Kumpf did not examine the phonological environment in which these regular verbs occurred; that is, were they followed by a word beginning with a consonant, a vowel, or by a pause? Also, she did not describe the past tense forms of the regular verbs. Did they have a final consonant cluster, /d/, or /Id/? As we have seen in Chapters Two and Three, these lower-level phenomena are essential constraints on the incidence of tense marking.

Overall, Kumpf concluded that this speaker's interlanguage called for unmarked forms to refer to completed action, and tensed forms to refer to states and to noncompleted action. We would like to suggest that before that conclusion can be drawn, the other surface level features must be examined.

We can now examine in detail the narrative in Table 4.1, utilizing Kumpf's method of analysis and considering her conclusions. Our analysis of the narrative is summarized in three tables and one figure. Table 4.2 lists the irregular and regular verb forms which were used in the narrative and the number of times they were unmarked for past tense over their total number of occurrences. The irregular verbs were unmarked for past 55.7 percent of the time, whereas the regular verbs were unmarked in fourteen out of fifteen occurrences, or 93.3 percent.

| IRREGULAR VERBS | # Unm/T | |
|---|---|---|
| come/came | 2/9 | |
| take/took | 1/2 | |
| is/was | 3/9 | |
| leave/left | 0/3 | |
| don't/didn't | 4/7 | |
| have/had | 7/7 | |
| give/gave | 2/2 | |
| find/found | 2/2 | |
| see/saw | 0/4 | |
| go/went | 1/3 | |
| get/got | 1/2 | |
| tell/told | 1/1 | |
| say/said | 3/3 | |
| cannot/could not | 1/1 | |
| what's/what was | 1/1 | |
| it's/it was | 2/2 | |
| won't/wouldn't | 1/1 | |
| will/would | 2/2 | |
| Total | 34/61 | = 55.7% |

| REGULAR VERBS | # Unm/T |
|---|---|
| live | 0/1 |
| continue | 1/1 |
| search | 4/4 |
| follow | 1/1 |
| help | 1/1 |
| show | 1/1 |
| sponsor | 1/1 |
| want | 3/3 |
| ask | 1/1 |
| call | 1/1 |
| Total | 14/15 = 93.3% |

Table 4.2. Incidence of Unmarked Tense for Irregular and Regular Verbs, Subject # 84

Table 4.3 presents the tabulations for unmarked tense by irregular and regular verbs for the entire interview, and compares the narrative to the remainder of the interview. This subject's tense marking behavior conforms to the pattern found in the wider group of subjects, in that irregular verbs are marked more frequently for past tense than regular verbs (54.2% versus 95.0% for the 1-3 LOR group). Although the numbers of occurrences are small, tense marking in individual verbs can also be examined. For example, come is often marked for past (in 7 out of 9 occurrences), whereas have is unmarked in all seven instances. These ratios are similar to the subject's tense marking patterns in the entire interview, in which come was unmarked in only 13 out or 75 occurrences, but have was unmarked in 29 out of 31 cases. Again, this mirrors the total group of subjects, where we found that some irregular verb forms were marked for past much more than others.

Table 4.4 presents the division of foreground and background clauses, and categorizes the verbs in these clauses by marked, unmarked, no tabulation, hyper-forms, invariant, and those which were used in a direct quote. They are further divided into regular and irregular verbs. No clear pattern emerges in this narrative with marked or unmarked forms being predominant in foreground or background clauses. However, there is variation in marking of the irregular verbs among these categories. For instance, come is unmarked for past in two foreground clauses, but marked in seven of them. Go is unmarked for past in one background clause, marked in another, and marked in one foreground clause. While more of the irregular verbs were marked for past than were unmarked in the foreground clauses (18 versus 11), a smaller number were marked than unmarked in the background clauses (9 versus 23). We suggest that this difference in marking is a function of the particular verbs which were used, and not a function of a discourse-level constraint. For instance, there are a number of

IRREGULAR VERBS

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| INTERVIEW | (excluding modals and contractions) | 112/275 | 40.7 |
| | (including modals and contractions) | 128/291 | 44.0 |
| NARRATIVE | (excluding modals and contractions) | 27/54 | 50.0 |
| | (including modals and contractions) | 34/61 | 55.7 |
| INTERVIEW - NARRATIVE | (excluding modals and contractions) | 85/221 | 38.5 |
| | (including modals and contractions) | 94/230 | 40.9 |

REGULAR VERBS

INTERVIEW

| | Following environment | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ____ C | | ____ V | | ____ // | |
| | Unm/T | % | Unm/T | % | Unm/T | % |
| Final /d/ | 10/11 | 90.0 | 7/7 | 100.0 | 1/1 | 100.0 |
| /Id/ | 6/7 | 85.7 | 2/2 | 100.0 | --- | --- |
| C.Cl. | 19/19 | 100.0 | 14/15 | 93.3 | 3/3 | 100.0 |
| Total | 35/37 | 94.6 | 23/24 | 95.8 | 4/4 | 100.0 |
| NARRATIVE | | | | | | |
| Total | 9/9 | 100.0 | 4/5 | 80.0 | 1/1 | 100.0 |
| INTERVIEW - NARRATIVE | | | | | | |
| Total | 26/28 | 92.9 | 19/19 | 100.0 | 3/3 | 100.0 |

Table 4.3. Incidence of Unmarked Tense for Irregular and Regular Verbs, in Interview and Narrative, Subject # 84

|  | Tense Marking | Verb Type | # of Occ. | Examples |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| FOREGROUND CLAUSES | Unmarked | Irr | 11 | give(2), find, come(2), take, get, tell, says(3) |
|  |  | Reg | 9 | continue, search(3), follow, help, show, ask, call |
|  | Marked | Irr | 18 | came(7), took, left(3), was, saw(4), went, got |
|  |  | Reg | 0 |  |
|  | No Tab | Irr | 0 |  |
|  |  | Reg | 5 | live(d) there(5) |
|  | Invariant |  | 2 | let,put |
| Total |  |  | 45 |  |
| BACKGROUND CLAUSES | Unmarked | Irr | 23 | find, go, have(3), have to(3), has to, is(3), will(2), won't, don't(4), cannot, what's, it's(2), |
|  |  | Reg | 5 | search, sponsor, want(3) |
|  | Marked | Irr | 9 | was(4), were, didn't(3), went |
|  |  | Reg | 1 | lived |
|  | No Tab | Irr | 5 | that's, have, is(2), don't |
|  |  | Reg | 1 | live(d) there |
|  |  |  | 1 | ____ not accept |
|  | Hyper-forms | Irr | 2 | thought(2) |
|  | Quote | Irr | 1 | have |
|  |  | Reg | 1 | want |
| Total |  |  | 49 |  |

Table 4.4. Tense Marking in Foreground and Background Clauses, Subject # 84

modals and contractions which were used in the background clauses. The modals in our other data often appeared as unmarked, and the contractions were judged to be too difficult to accurately analyze for phonological reasons, and were not generally included in the analysis of tense marking. That is why the totals in Table 4.3 separate other verbs from modals and contractions. Their inclusion here supports the notion that particular verbs are themselves having an effect on tense marking. Also, have was often used in the background clauses, and is another verb which was generally unmarked in the wider data set, and could skew the figures for the number of unmarked forms.

Returning to Table 4.3, we note a higher percentage of unmarking of irregular verbs in the narrative than in the interview as a whole (50.0% versus 40.7%; or 55.7% versus 44.0% including modals and contractions). There were other narratives within the rest of the data from this subject which are not separated out at this point, as well as discourse genres which would utilize past tense forms. We do not know if the difference in percentages here is significant. If it is, the difference may be a result of discourse factors; that is, due to narrative versus non-narrative speech behavior, or it might be a function of the individual verbs which were used. Further examination of the whole interview will be required before a definite conclusion can be drawn in this regard.

A final feature to be examined for this narrative is the sequencing of marked and unmarked verbs throughout the narrative. This sequencing is displayed in Figure 4.1, with marked and unmarked verbs appearing on opposite sides of the line. The succession of episodes described in the narrative is indicated by lines drawn to the verb which initiated each episode. As discussed above, both Godfrey and Wolfson have investigated tense sequencing. If we were to apply Godfrey's analysis based on interruptions in a tense continuity to this data, it would be marked for many errors. Because the narrative begins with a

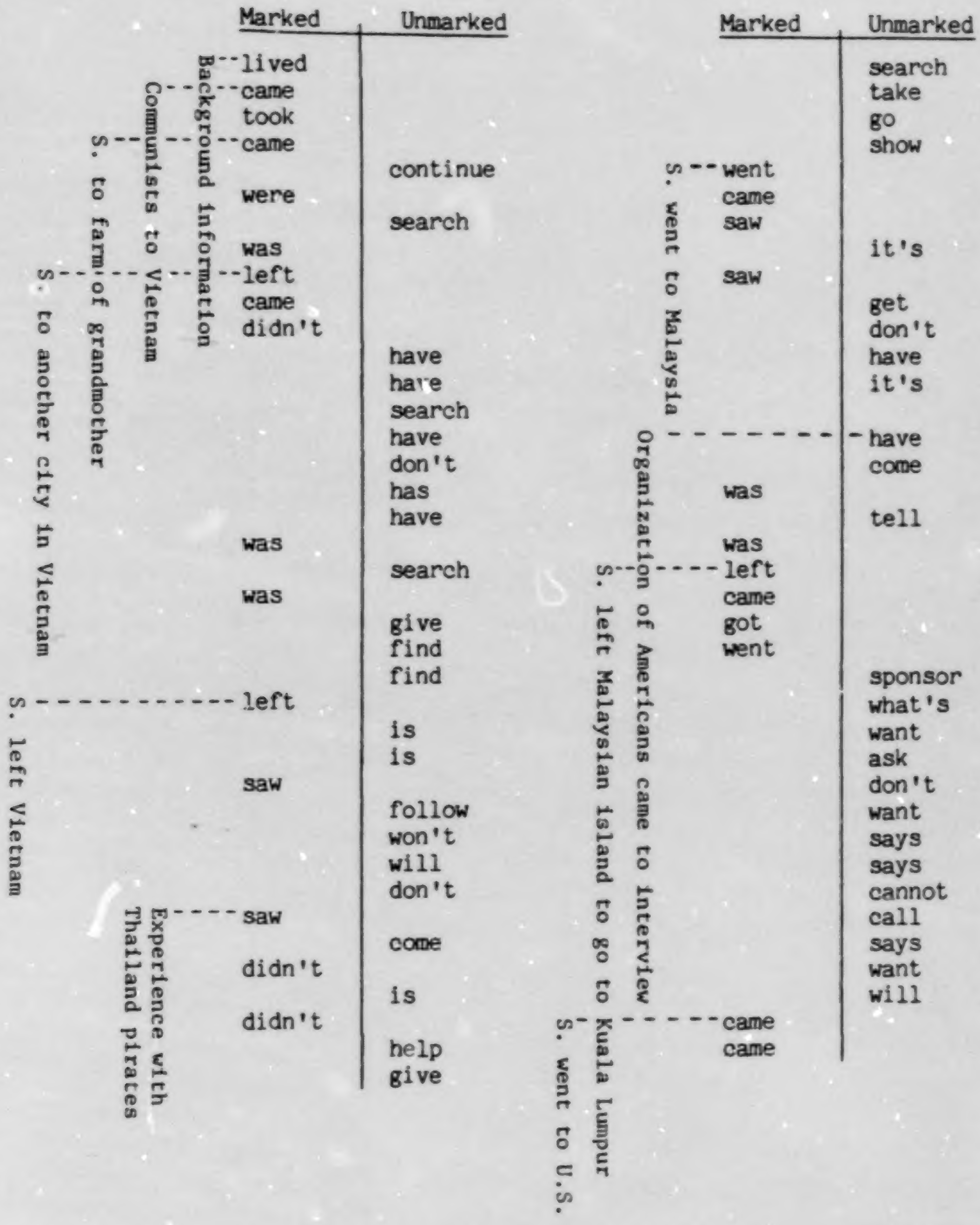

Marked
Unmarked
lived
came
took
came
were
was
left
came
didn't
was
was
left
saw
saw
didn't
didn't
continue
search
have
have
search
have
don't
has
have
search
give
find
find
is
is
follow
won't
will
don't
come
is
help
give
Background information
Communists to Vietnam
S. to farm of grandmother
S. to another city in Vietnam
S. left Vietnam
Experience with Thailand pirates
Marked
Unmarked
went
came
saw
saw
was
was
left
came
got
went
came
came
search
take
go
show
it's
get
don't
have
it's
have
come
tell
sponsor
what's
want
ask
don't
want
says
says
cannot
call
says
want
will
S. went to Malaysia
Organization of Americans came to interview
S. left Malaysian island to go to Kuala Lumpur
S. went to U.S.

Figure 4.1. Tense Sequencing in Narrative, Subject # 84

marked form (came), and the temporal reference remains the same throughout the narration, past tense forms should be used throughout the narrative according to Godfrey. Some of his explanations for this non-maintenance of tense continuity would possibly apply to this data, such as the speaker's attention limitations or the degree of difficulty in maintaining tense continuity (especially for certain verbs). However, the explanations would be incomplete without acknowledging the fact that, for example, fourteen out of the fifteen regular verbs which were used were unmarked for past tense, apparently because of a lower-level constraint due to verb form. These verbs do not appear in one cluster in the narrative, but are interspersed throughout it. Therefore, the tense continuity is obviously affected by the regular/irregular distinction. In the same way, particular verbs which are generally not marked (such as have) would also interrupt the tense continuity in Godfrey's analysis.

Finally, one last observation related to Wolfson's claims about the effect of the historical present tense. An examination of the narrative as it is divided into episodes clearly shows that the present and past tense forms do not fall neatly into sections determined by episodes, as would be expected if unmarked forms could be interpreted as historical present forms. (Wolfson [1978] reported that the switch between past tense and the conversational historical present operates to "partition important events in the story from each other.") It does not appear, then, that this subject is using the present tense form to represent the historical present tense in this narrative, as Wolfson suggested that second language learners might do. We suspect that a much higher level of language proficiency would be needed for the native-like alternation of past and historical present tense forms in English.

The second narrative we examine was extracted from an interview with a thirty-three year old female who had been in the United States for seven years at the time of the interview (Subject # 78). The narrative is presented in Table 4.5, and the analysis appears in Tables 4.6-4.8 and Figure 4.2. Within the narrative, this speaker marked slightly over half of the irregular verb occurrences for past tense (51.2%), but marked none of the regular verbs. In the entire interview she marked a regular verb only one time in eighty occurrences (1.3%), whereas the irregular verbs were marked in 31.3 percent of the occurrences (including modals and contractions). For irregular verbs, there was more marking in the narrative than in the overall interview; the opposite pattern vis-a-vis our first speaker. Even though the number of occurrences for many of the individual verbs which were used in the narrative is low, it should be noted that only one of the irregular verbs appeared in the narrative in both marked and unmarked forms (go/went); that is, varying in tense marking. All of the other irregular verbs occurred only in marked or in unmarked form. This adds further support to the idea that particular verbs may be constraints (i.e. lexical constraints) on unmarking.

The tabulations in Table 4.8 indicate that this speaker had a much greater ratio of background to foreground clauses (49 to 19) than did the first speaker (49 to 45). As in the first narrative we discussed, more irregular verbs were marked for past tense than unmarked in foreground clauses (8 versus 2), while more were unmarked than marked in background clauses (19 versus 14). This may have been a function of the individual verbs which were used in these clauses. For example, said (marked for past) occurred seven times in the foreground clauses, accounting for seven of eight of the foreground clauses which were marked. It is interesting to note that this speaker used the past tense form in each of the five instances in which she used a modal in the narrative, which may be an example of forms that have been learned as separate lexical items, as Kumpf (1984) suggested. Again, these examples indicate the influence that particular lexical items have on tense marking patterns.

Table 4.5. Narrative, by Clause Type, Verb Form, and Tense Marking, Subject # 78

1 = marked for past tense
0 = unmarked for past tense
h.f. = hyper-form
N.T. = no tabulation (for various reasons)
F = foreground
B = background
Inv = invariant

S: ... and we have a very nice man, American man live in Charlestown, West Virginia. He usually come to visit our family every year New Year or Christmas he come to eat with us and give something like present. He very friendly.

| Foreground | Background | Other | Foreground/ Background F/B | Tense Marking 0/1/NT | Verb Form R/I |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (F: How did you know him?) | | | | | |
| | When we come to in United States, | | B | 0 | I |
| | we go uh | | B | 0 | I |
| | we have a sponsor in Manassas | | B | 0 | I |
| | | uh that lady from Philippines. | - | - | - |
| | He has a big house and about twenty or over twenty dogs. | | B | 0 | I |
| | | Yes, many, many dogs. | - | - | - |
| | | But uh, | - | - | - |
| | | and her husband american | - | - | - |
| | I think she divorce | | B | NT | I |
| | And she have big house | | B | 0 | I |
| | we live about just one month. | | B | 0 | R |
| | | And then we | - | - | - |
| we go to the | | | F | 0 | I |
| we said | | | F | 1 | I |
| | we want to move | | B | 0 | R |
| | to area have the Vietnamese | | B | 0 | I |
| we live that night in the wood, | | | F | NT | R |
| | | very lonely, | - | - | - |
| | we didn't know anything. | | B | 1 | I |
| | couldn't talk any people, | | B | 1 | I |
| | and never see Vietnamese, | | B | 0 | I |
| | and never see church, shopping, | | B | 0 | I |
| | | very very far | - | - | - |
| | | yeah | - | - | - |
| so we said | | | F | 1 | I |
| | we would like to go | | B | 1 | I |
| | to area have Vietnamese | | B | 0 | I |
| | and want to go to school to learn some English. | | B | 0 | R |
| | | Yeah. | - | - | - |
| | | So uh | - | - | - |
| | We tell her that. | | B | 0 | I |
| | My father help her to like cut and cut the wood. | | B | 0 | R |
| | So we just live with her one month, | | B | 0 | R |
| and she took | | | F | 1 | I |
| | I think over $400 from our family, | | B | NT | I |
| | | yeah, | - | - | - |
| she said that for food | | | F | 1 | I |
| | he, she didn't count for rent, | | B | 1 | I |
| | we live with her, | | B | 0 | R |
| | she said | | B | 1 | I |
| | she didn't count for rent. | | B | 1 | I |
| | | (F: How long were you living there?) | - | - | - |
| | | Just one month, | - | - | - |
| | | I say/said(?) only one month. | - | - | - |
| | | (F: Just one month, and that was $400?) | - | - | - |
| | | Yes, | - | - | - |
| | and we didn't know anything, | | B | 1 | I |
| | | oh, | - | - | - |
| | I couldn't understand at all, | | B | 1 | I |

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

| Foreground | Background | Other | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | my sister understand some | | | | |
| | because she went to | | | | |
| | she learn uh English before in my county | | | | |
| | so she understand. | | | | |
| | But I and my family nobody understand only her, | | B | 0 | I |
| | the one now have a good job in California. | | B | NT | I |
| | | And uh | - | - | - |
| so we move. | | | F | 0 | R |
| | we me at that time we couldn't rent any apartment, | | B | 1 | I |
| | because we didn't know anywhere | | B | 1 | I |
| | and couldn't talk | | B | 1 | I |
| | | and no job | - | - | - |
| | | nobody ___?___. | - | - | - |
| So we ask a father | | | F | 0 | R |
| | | Vietnamese father at a church, | - | - | - |
| | | like a catholic priest | - | - | - |
| he help us | | | F | 0 | R |
| he talk to CC | | | F | NT | R |
| | | have you heard about CC ? | - | - | - |
| | so one man is working for CC | | B | 0 | I |
| | | to find out find out | - | - | - |
| | this man is Mr. __________ | | B | 0 | I |
| | he has a big house in downtown Alexandria. | | B | 0 | I |
| | | Yeah, | - | - | - |
| | | so he very good man, | - | - | - |
| he said | | | F | 1 | I |
| | oh now he has a house | | B | 0 | I |
| | nobody live | | B | 0 | R |
| | | so "just come to live." | - | - | - |
| | | Yeah | - | - | - |
| so we move to his house, | | | F | NT | R |
| | we live, | | B | 0 | R |
| | and we didn't have anything, | | B | 1 | I |
| | | just clothes, | - | - | - |
| | we have no pot nothing to cook, | | B | NT | I |
| | | no...no bed nothing. | - | - | - |
| So he said | | | F | 1 | I |
| | he have a bed, | | B | 0 | I |
| | he have something like dishes, bowl and pot for cooking. | | B | 0 | I |
| | | "So just use". | - | - | - |
| | | Yeah, | - | .. | - |
| | we live about 8 months | | B | 0 | R |
| | and he didn't take any money. | | B | 1 | I |
| He said uh "OK". | | | F | 1 | I |
| He help my father to find a job, | | | F | 0 | R |
| my sister and my brother go to school | | | F | 0 | I |
| | and we just pay for electric, gas, telephone | | B | 0 | R |
| | | something like that. | - | - | - |
| So we live uh 8 months | | | F | 0 | R |
| and he said now | | | F | 1 | I |
| | he need to fix the house to sell, | | B | 0 | R |
| so we move to near Landmark Shopping Center. | | | F | NT | R |

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

| IRREGULAR VERBS | #Unm/T |
|---|---|
| come/came | 1/1 |
| go/went | 3/4 |
| have/had | 9/9 |
| say/said | 0/8 |
| don't/didn't | 0/7 |
| see/saw | 2/2 |
| tell/told | 1/1 |
| take/took | 0/1 |
| understand/ understood | 3/3 |
| is/was (aux) | 1/1 |
| (main verb) | 1/1 |
| cannot/could not | 0/4 |
| will/would | 0/1 |
| Total | 21/43 = 48.8% |

| REGULAR VERBS | # Unm/T |
|---|---|
| live | 7/7 |
| want | 2/2 |
| help | 3/3 |
| learn | 1/1 |
| move | 1/1 |
| ask | 1/1 |
| pay | 1/1 |
| need | 1/1 |
| Total | 17/17 = 100.0% |

Table 4.6. Incidence of Unmarked Tense for Irregular and Regular Verbs, Subject # 78

In the tense sequencing chart for this narrative (Figure 4.2) we again list the marked verbs on the left side and the unmarked forms on the right. The verbs which could not be tabulated for phonological reasons are displayed in the center of the figure. The episodes are marked according to the verb which was used to initiate the telling of the episode. Again, the alternations of marked and unmarked forms do not correlate neatly with the initiation of the episodes in the narrative. This evidence suggests that this speaker is not utilizing the historical present tense as we would expect it to be utilized as a systematic discourse strategy. An analysis based only on interruptions of tense continuity for reasons such as attention limitations or difficulty in maintaining tense continuities, as Godfrey (1980) may suggest, does not seem to be an adequate analysis of this narrative, if lower-level phenomena, such as phonological form of the regular verb, are ignored in the analysis. In other words, while attention limitations may be used to explain unmarked tense, a more explicit reason regarding pronunciation difficulties may be be more accurate.

IRREGULAR VERBS

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| INTERVIEW | (excluding modals and contractions) | 146/203 | 71.9 |
| | (including modals and contractions) | 147/211 | 69.7 |
| NARRATIVE | (excluding modals and contractions) | 21/38 | 55.3 |
| | (including modals and contractions) | 21/43 | 48.8 |
| INTERVIEW - NARRATIVE | (excluding modals and contractions) | 125/165 | 75.8 |
| | (including modals and contractions) | 126/168 | 75.0 |

REGULAR VERBS

| | Following environment | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ___C | | ___V | | ___// | |
| | Unm/T | % | Unm/T | % | Unm/T | % |
| INTERVIEW | | | | | | |
| Final /d/ | 7/7 | 100.0 | 9/9 | 100.0 | 1/1 | 100.0 |
| /Id/ | 7/8 | 87.5 | 1/1 | 100.0 | --- | --- |
| C.Cl. | 21/21 | 100.0 | 27/27 | 100.0 | 6/6 | 100.0 |
| Total | 35/36 | 97.2 | 37/37 | 100.0 | 7/7 | 100.0 |
| NARRATIVE | | | | | | |
| Total | 9/9 | 100.0 | 7/7 | 100.0 | 1/1 | 100.0 |
| INTERVIEW - NARRATIVE | | | | | | |
| Total | 26/27 | 96.3 | 30/30 | 100.0 | 6/6 | 100.0 |

Table 4.7. Incidence of Unmarked Tense for Irregular and Regular Verbs, in Interview and Narrative, Subject # 78

|  | Tense Marking | Verb Type | # of Occ. | Examples |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| FOREGROUND CLAUSES | Unmarked | Irr | 2 | go(2) |
|  |  | Reg | 5 | help(2), move, ask, live |
|  | Marked | Irr | 8 | said(7), took |
|  |  | Reg | 0 |  |
|  | No Tab | Irr | 0 |  |
|  |  | Reg | 4 | live(d) that, talk(ed) to, move(d) to(2) |
| Total |  |  | 19 |  |
| BACKGROUND CLAUSES | Unmarked | Irr | 19 | come, go, have(6), has(3), see(2), tell, understand(3), is(2) |
|  |  | Reg | 12 | live(6), want(2), help, learn, pay, need |
|  | Marked | Irr | 14 | didn't(7), couldn't(4), would, said, went |
|  |  | Reg | 0 |  |
|  | No Tab | Irr | 3 | have/had, think, have |
|  |  | Reg | 0 |  |
|  |  | deletion(?) | 1 | _____ divorce |
| Total |  |  | 49 |  |

Table 4.8. Tense Marking in Foreground and Background Clauses, Subject # 78

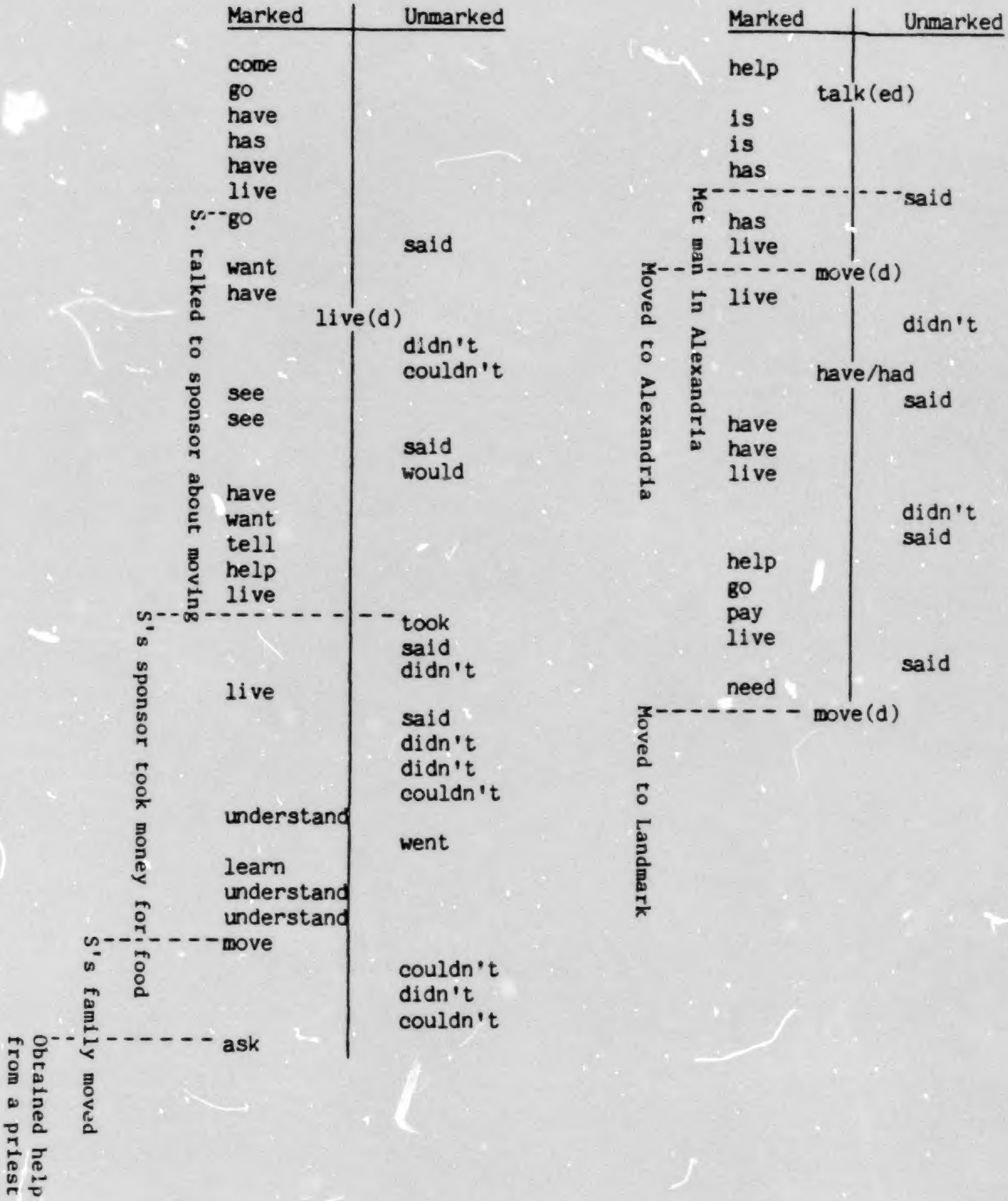

Marked
Unmarked
come
go
have
has
have
live
go
said
want
have
live(d)
didn't
couldn't
see
see
said
would
have
want
tell
help
live
took
said
didn't
live
said
didn't
didn't
couldn't
understand
went
learn
understand
understand
move
couldn't
didn't
couldn't
ask
S. talked to sponsor about moving
S's sponsor took money for food
S's family moved
Obtained help from a priest
Marked
Unmarked
help
talk(ed)
is
is
has
said
has
live
move(d)
live
didn't
have/had
said
have
have
live
didn't
said
help
go
pay
live
said
need
move(d)
Met man in Alexandria
Moved to Alexandria
Moved to Landmark

Figure 4.2. Tense Sequencing in Narrative, Subject # 78

## Conclusion

In this chapter we have examined tense marking in two representative narratives extracted from our wider data set. We have demonstrated that some of the constraints which were found to be operating on tense marking in the interview data, when considered as a whole, were also operating within the narratives. In both narratives the irregular versus regular verb distinction was maintained. That is, irregular verbs were marked for tense more often than regular verbs. Also, there was variation in marking between individual verbs, showing some of the form differences noted in Chapter Three. We conclude that these constraints are critical factors influencing tense marking within narratives. We speculate that some of the other constraints that were discussed in Chapters Two and Three, such as following phonological environment, also influence tense marking in narratives. However, more data would need to be analyzed to reveal their effects.

Some interesting patterns on the discourse level were revealed. Subject # 84 had a higher ratio of unmarked to marked irregular verbs in the narrative versus the entire interview, while Subject # 78 showed the opposite pattern (a higher percentage of marking in the narrative). We do not know at this point whether or not this pattern is related to higher-level factors which influenced the two speakers' tense marking in opposite manners. The regular verbs had approximately the same percentage of unmarking in the narratives as in the interviews. However, there were very few regular verbs marked for past tense in general, making it difficult to discern any difference in patterning in the narrative versus the entire interview for them.

With respect to foreground and background clauses as presented by Kumpf (1984), we found that the speakers in both narratives marked more irregular verbs in the foreground clauses than in the background. We suggested that this was probably due to lexical constraints rather than to discourse-level constraints. It may be, however, that there are higher-level constraints which are operating for these speakers to make tense marking in the foreground clauses seem to be more important than in background clauses. This pattern is the opposite of the one that Kumpf (1984) found. In her data, verbs which represented completed action in the foreground clauses were marked for tense less often than verbs which represented states and uncompleted action in the background clauses. However, because she did not examine lower-level features, we do not know how they may have influenced tense marking in her data. For example, she found that most stative verbs (which includes copula) in the background clauses were marked. Our analysis of the wider data set revealed that be was frequently marked for past in comparison to many other irregular verbs. Thus, we conjecture that the stative/non-stative distinction is probably related to verb form be (as a suppletive past) rather than the aspectual distinction of stative versus non-stative. At least the form distinction must be controlled (e.g. by comparing regular form statives versus regular form non-statives) before such a conclusion can be reached.

We also examined the tense sequencing within the narratives, as Godfrey (1980) and Wolson (1982) have suggested. Although some of Godfrey's explanations for interruptions in tense continuity may apply to this data, such as attention limitations of the speakers, or difficulty in maintaining the tense continuity, we cannot be certain that it is these factors which are operating on tense marking if lower-level features are not also investigated. In reference to Wolfson's method of analysis, it seems that these speakers were probably not utilizing historical present tense, since tense switching did not correlate significantly with episode boundaries. A high level of proficiency in English would probably need to be attained before non-native speakers could utilize historical present tense.

While discourse factors in second language acquisition data certainly need to be researched, studies based only on methods of discourse analysis are presently incomplete. Without first taking surface-level features and the variation patterns of those features into account, evidence based only on a discourse level analysis of tense marking will be highly skewed and the conclusions made on this basis will remain quite suspect.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# TENSE MARKING AND WRITING

## Introduction

Our presentation of the patterned variability of tense marking in spoken language provides a solid empirical basis for the examination of tense marking in written language. Although there certainly is evidence to suggest that spoken language divergence may be manifested in written language, there is considerable debate over the precise nature of this manifestation. Some studies (e.g. Wolfram and Whiteman 1971, Kreeft 1984) have viewed this manifestation as transparent and direct, but other studies (e.g. Whiteman 1976) have challenged this assumption.

We have demonstrated in our previous chapters that there are a number of surface constraints that systematically affect the variability of tense marking patterns, but that higher level discourse constraints were not particularly relevant in accounting for these patterns. We cannot, however, simply assume that this is the case in writing, given the differences that exist between the two mediums. Are the same kinds of surface constraints that were isolated in spoken language operative in written language? Are there other kinds of constraints, including those on a higher organizational level, that might be isolated? What constraints on variability (if any) can be isolated for writing? These are empirical questions that hopefully can be answered on the basis of our analysis of a written language sample.

Sample

Since the focus of this study is on variability in tense marking, the only writing samples that are relevant for analysis are those that have sufficient potential for the realization of tense marking and those that show some variability.
In order to establish this base, we thus set up the following criteria for selection of primary writing data in this study: (1) the writer must have at least 8 cases (including all samples of writing) which would require past tense marking according to the rules of standard English tense formation; (2) there must be at least two or more instances of unmarked past tense. These criteria are somewhat arbitrary, but are necessary to ensure writing data that permit the systematic study of variability in tense marking.

Although we collected over 50 writing samples from different speakers in all, only 18 different writing samples, representing 13 different writers met the criteria for inclusion in the primary corpus, and all of these were writers in the 1-3 LOR group . The secondary corpus, consisting of writing samples that did not meet criteria for quantitative study, is used only in the qualitative analysis. In some cases, the secondary writing samples simply did not have enough potential cases for the quantitative study of tense marking as writers often choose topics other than past tense narratives for their writing sample. In a few cases, there were not enough examples of unmarked past tense to satisfy criterion for studying variability in tense marking. Our primary sample is not extensive, but we still think that patterns of variability in written language tense marking should be indicated in the analysis. Confirmation of the patterns indicated here, however, will have to come from a survey considerably more extensive than the one conducted here. The profile of writers making up the sample used for quantitative tabulations is given below.

| Sample | Age | Sex | LOR | Writing Passage Type |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9 | 14 | M | 1-3 | Narrative, How Spent Weekend |
| 21 | 15 | F | 1-3 | Book Report, "Gone with the Wind" |
| 22 | 13 | F | 1-3 | Book Report, "Gone with the Wind" |
| 23 | 13 | F | 1-3 | Narrative, Funny Happenings |
| 25a | 12 | F | 1-3 | Book Report, "Not a Teeny Wink" |
| 25b | | | | Book Report, "In the Land of Small Dragon" |
| 26 | 11 | M | 1-3 | Book Report, "The Silly Little Rabbit" |
| 28a | 11 | M | 1-3 | Story, "Outer Space" |
| 28b | | | | Story, "Freebus Gesort" |
| 28c | | | | Story, "Lost in a Storm" |
| 30a | 11 | M | 1-3 | Story, "Lost in a Storm" |
| 30b | | | | Story, "Discovering Outer Space" |
| 30c | | | | Story, "Trip to Mars" |
| 33 | 10 | M | 1-3 | Story, "Wishes" |
| 34 | 12 | M | 1-3 | Narrative, World War III |
| 40 | 26 | M | 1-3 | Narrative, Life in United States |
| 44 | 25 | M | 1-3 | Narrative Description of Vietnam |
| 45 | 25 | M | 1-3 | Narrative, Moving to New Country |

Table 5.1. Primary Writing Samples for Quantitative Analysis

Following is an example of a written sample, with each instance of potential tense marking noted. Cases in which past tense is marked are indicated by solid underlining and instances of unmarking are indicated by broken underlining. In addition, cases of "hyper" or over-correction involving tense marking and auxiliaries (cf. the Section on Hyper-Forms ) are noted with an asterisk. This sample comes from a book report which was written as part of a regular classroom assignment by a 15 year old female who has been here 1-3 years.

### Gone with the Wind

"Gone with the Wind" is an exciting love story, *has written by Margaret Mitchell. This story *has begun on a bright April afternoon of 1861, in Atlanta, Georgia.

The main character in this story was Scarlett O'Hara. She was one of the Coast Aristocrat of French descent. Her father was Gerald O'Hara, the owner of Tara. Tara is a plantation which has a length of more than 200 miles. And the important characters in this story are Melly Hamilton, Charles Hamilton, Rhett, Ellen O'Hara, Ashley Wilkes and much much more.

Scarlet O'Hara was a beautiful, charmy girl. But she was also an unfortunate girl. This story *has written about her during the civil war between Southerners and the Yankees. Scarlett *was fallen in love with Ashley Wilkes, but he was going to *married his cousin which is Melly Hamilton. Scarlett became miserable from that time. After a few years, *she's married Charles Hamilton, and hope this will make her forget about Ashley Wilkes. After two months of living with Charles, she had a baby, and Charles's dead in the war, by pneumonia. But anyway she's still loved Ashley in secrete [sic] and noone could understand. During this war time, all ladies lived very lonely. Melly (Charles's sister) always stay with Scarlett and comfort her. Melly was a very nice little girl. She had a shaped-face with black eyes, pointed of chin and square of jaw. She loved Scarlett so much. But cause of love, Scarlett always wish that Melly would dead so she could have Ashley, and Melley *has never known that.

Year after year, cause of money, miserable, love, Scarlett *had been remarried. The man was Rhett, who she was not only didn't want to *married Rhett, but always remembered Asley. She love him very much. But he would never answer her.

When the war was over, and Ashley's coming back. Melly *has been miscarriage and dead. And now everyone was miserable. Before Scarlett wish that Melly would die so she can have Ashley, now Ashley was coming back and Melly was dead, but she didn't want him any more. Everything was reveal, and Rhett knew everything, now is the time he understand about his wife. At

> last he *decided* to go back to his own place of birth, and forget everything. He *try* to find his own new life, and people whom he*'s* never known before. He *would* enjoy hunting, and fishing in the rest of his life. This *happened* make Scarlett *felt* crazy.
>
> At last Scarlett *felt* so guilty; she *thought* the only man he *love* *was* Rhett. But now *is* too late for her to say that, when she already *lost* Rhett, the man who *love* her so much, and she *has* never answer him by the nice words. She *has* always run along with the man who never *love* her.
>
> After reading the story, I *thought* it *was* so sad , but I *liked* it. It *helped* me learn a lot of new words, which I *haven't* known before. It *helped* me to practice in reading. This *was* the most interesting story I've ever read. It *took* me a long time to sit there and read. Sometimes I *laught* and sometimes *cried*.

The sample illustrates several of the problems involved in tabulating examples of tense marking, and the decisions made in recording particular cases as marked or unmarked. First of all, we have tried to separate generic tense interludes in the narratives from past tense narrative lines in the discourse. For example, in line 8 through 10 of the narrative, the general comment about the characters is parenthetical to the narrative line and does not require past tense. Thus, we do not consider this a case of potential past tense marking. However, other cases provide a generic setting in a past tense context (e.g. line 11-13). In such cases, there might be an initial choice between past and non-past tense, but an initial choice to provide a past tense setting requires its continuation in the description. In such cases, a form is tabulated as unmarked for potential past, based on the target English norm. While other investigators might have interpreted some particiular examples of potential tense marking slightly differently from our analysis here, we do not feel that this would result in significant differences in the overall patterns of tense marking variation (see our discussion of reliability in Chapter Three). In cases of auxiliary overextension or generalization (as in line 1, where *has written* is used for *was written*, or line 13, where *was fallen* is used for *fell*), we have tabulated the marking pattern on the basis of the surface form found in the passage rather than the presumed English target form. Such decisions are relevant to our tabulation of different kinds of surface forms, such as *be*, *have*, and so forth. Finally, there are some cases of contraction involving *is* and *has* which we have tabulated as unmarked for past tense because the standard English written convention allows only non-past forms to be contracted (In spoken language, there are dialects of English that allow contraction to take place in both non-past and past forms, cf. Wolfram and Christian 1976). Thus, cases such as *Ashley's coming* in line 31 or *she's still loved Ashley in secrete* [sic] in line 15 are tabulated as indications of unmarked past tense for *is* and *have*, respectively. Although different interpretations of these cases might lead to adjusted figures in the overall quantitative tabulations, the major patterns of tense marking should remain transparent. We shall have more to say about some of these patterns in our consideration of verb subclasses.

### Variability in Tense Marking

As in spoken language, tense marking in written language can be a highly variable phenomenon, with forms sometimes being marked for past tense and sometimes being unmarked. However, we cannot simply assume that the nature of this variability is isomorphic with that found in spoken language. The patterns of variation may be different, and the systematic constraints on variability may be different as well. The nature of this variation in writing is, of course, an empirical question, which we shall attempt to answer on the basis of the quantitative evidence found in our samples.

Our initial breakdown of the incidence of tense marking is made between regular and irregular verb forms, where the regular forms are defined as those represented as -*ed* (or -*d*) in writing (e.g. *loved*, *messed*, *wanted*) and /d/, /t/, or /Id/ phonologically (e.g. [lʌvd], [mEst], [wʌntId]). All other past tense realizations are considered irregular, including suppletive forms, internal vowel change, and replacive consonants. The basic breakdown is given for each writing sample used in this study in Table 5.2. In the accompanying figure, Figure 5.1, a comparison of tense marking for written language and spoken language tense unmarking (from Chapter Four) is given.

| Writing Sample | Regular | | Irregular | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Unm./Tot | % Unm. | Unm./Tot | % Unm. | Unm./Tot | % Unm. |
| 9 | 1/2 | 50.0 | 2/10 | 20.0 | 3/12 | 25.0 |
| 21 | 10/20 | 50.0 | 20/57 | 35.1 | 30/77 | 39.0 |
| 22 | 6/20 | 30.0 | 25/54 | 46.3 | 31/74 | 41.9 |
| 23 | 1/5 | 20.0 | 2/15 | 13.3 | 3/20 | 15.0 |
| 25a | 0/2 | 0.0 | 1/6 | 16.7 | 1/8 | 12.5 |
| 25b | 1/2 | 50.0 | 2/6 | 33.3 | 3/8 | 37.5 |
| 26 | 2/2 | 100.0 | 2/7 | 28.6 | 4/9 | 44.4 |
| 28a | 1/1 | 100.0 | 1/13 | 7.7 | 2/14 | 14.3 |
| 28b | 6/8 | 75.0 | 2/7 | 28.6 | 8/15 | 53.3 |
| 28c | 4/7 | 57.1 | 5/17 | 29.4 | 9/24 | 37.5 |
| 30a | 3/5 | 60.0 | 9/17 | 52.9 | 12/22 | 54.5 |
| 30b | 3/5 | 60.0 | 7/17 | 41.2 | 10/22 | 45.4 |
| 30c | 4/10 | 40.0 | 8/20 | 40.0 | 12/30 | 40.0 |
| 33 | 2/5 | 40.0 | 1/3 | 33.3 | 3/8 | 37.5 |
| 34 | 1/1 | 100.0 | 10/22 | 45.5 | 11/23 | 47.8 |
| 40 | 1/12 | 8.3 | 1/20 | 5.0 | 2/32 | 6.3 |
| 44 | 2/7 | 28.6 | 0/15 | 0.0 | 2/22 | 9.1 |
| 45 | 1/4 | 25.0 | 1/8 | 12.5 | 2/12 | 16.7 |
| Total | 49/118 | 41.5 | 99/314 | 31.5 | 148/432 | 34.3 |

Table 5.2 Unmarked Tense for Regular and Irregular Verb Forms in Writing Samples

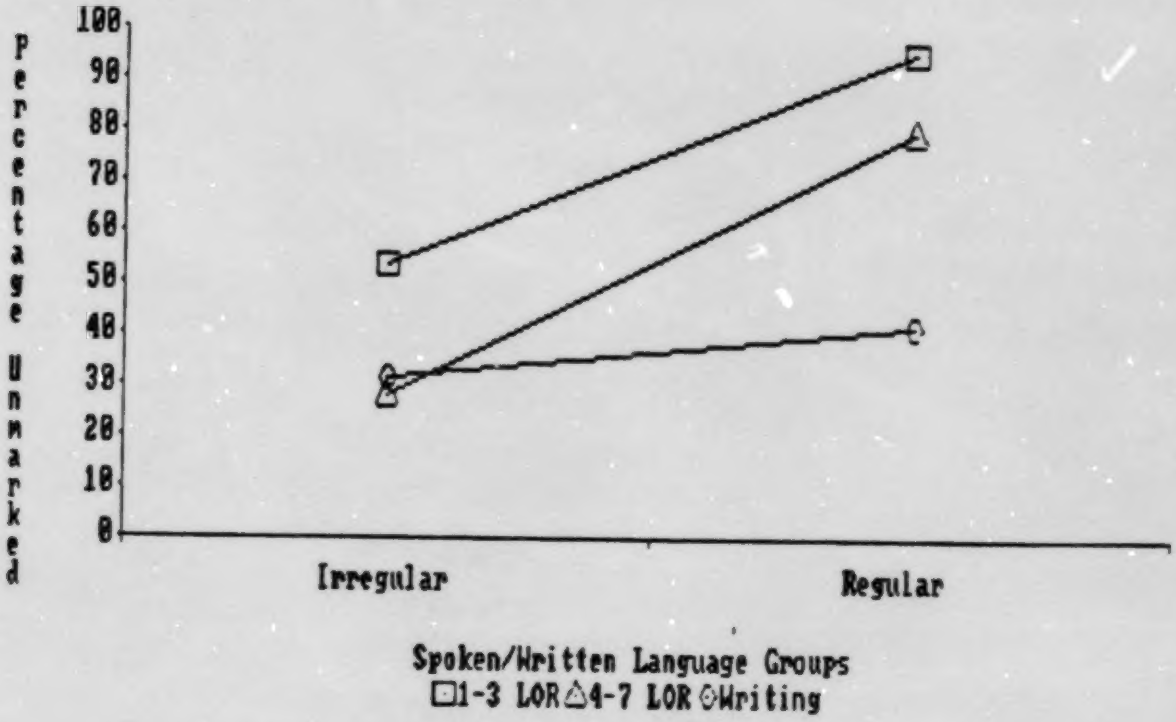


Fig. 5.1 Unmarked Tense for Regular and Irregular Verb Forms

Several observations can be made on the basis of Table 5.2 and Figure 5.1. To begin with, we see that the overall incidence of unmarked tense is generally higher in spoken language than in written language. If the total corpus of written language samples were included, the difference between tense marking in spoken and written language would be much more dramatic. As it is, given our criteria for inclusion in the primary corpus, the frequency levels of unmarking are in line with the 4-7 LOR spoken language group. This parallelism exists despite the fact that the all of our writers in the primary sample have been in the United States from one to three years.

Differences in spoken and written language tense marking frequency are probably best explained in terms of the overt learning that takes place with respect to the English writing system and the formality of the task involved in writing. In writing, some of the phonological processes that may result in surface unmarking (cf. Chapter Three) may be overcome through rote memorization of forms. In our earlier study of writing in Vietnamese English (Christian, Wolfram, and Hatfield 1983), we noted that there was relatively limited phonological transfer in written language as compared with the extensive phonological transfer that could be found in the spoken language. Some of the phonologically-derived basis for tense unmarking obviously may be overcome in written language even though speakers continue to retain extensive surface unmarking in spoken language.

A related observation concerns the relative strength of the regular/irregular constraint on marking found in written language as compared with spoken language. In spoken language, the constraint is significant for all groups, and unmarking is always favored on regular forms. The constraint is not nearly so strong in written language, although the pattern suggests that it is maintained as a slightly favorable effect on unmarking. Individual writers with adequate tokens for quantitative tabulation (five or more in each category) tend to favor unmarking on regular forms, but the pattern is not universal. Of the 10 writing samples with five or more cases of potential tense unmarking of both regular and irregular forms, eight favor the unmarking of regular forms, one (No. 22) favors unmarking on irregular forms, and one (No. 30c) shows no real difference. In spoken language, we have yet to find a speaker who favored unmarking with irregular forms (cf. Chapter Four). We thus suggest that the pattern we have here in the written language is indicative of the spoken language, but hardly isomorphic. In the process of the medium shift, the constraint may be weakened considerably, to the point where it should be viewed as a tendency rather than an inflexible constraint.

Although the regular/irregular constraint is not as strong in written language as it is in spoken language, we have found that writers with "vestigial tense unmarking" (i.e. cases limited to less than 10 per cent of all potential cases of tense marking) tend to retain it on regular forms. Thus, several writers in the secondary corpus who have a single case of tense unmarking reveal it on a regular form.

In our tabulation of spoken language surface forms in Chapter Four, we saw that the particular way in which the irregular past was formed was a constraint on tense marking. Specifically, we saw that the categories suppletive (predominantly *be* but also *go/went*) internal vowel change (e.g. *come/came*, *run/ran*), internal vowel change + suffix (e.g. *leave/left*, *keep/kept*, replacive (predominantly *have/had* but also items such as *make/made*) and modal (e.g. *can/could*, *will/would*) were relevant categories affecting the patterned variability of past tense marking. In Table 5.3, we have recorded the incidence of past tense marking in terms of these same categories, while Figure 5.2 compares the written pattern with the overall figures for the two LOR groups used as our primary spoken language sample. Because of the limited numbers of tokens for individual writers, we only include the summary percentages for the different categories.

| Writing Sample | Suppl. | Int. Vow. | Vow.+Suf. | Repl. | Modal |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Unm./Tot. | Unm./Tot. | Unm./Tot. | Unm./Tot. | Unm./Tot. |
| 9 | 0/4 | 1/4 | --/-- | 1/2 | --/-- |
| 21 | 7/25 | 1/4 | 0/7 | 10/13 | 2/8 |
| 22 | 3/14 | 4/7 | 14/28 | 3/3 | 1/2 |
| 23 | 1/9 | 0/2 | 0/3 | --/-- | 1/1 |
| 25a | 0/2 | 0/2 | --/-- | --/-- | 1/2 |
| 25b | 2/4 | 0/1 | --/-- | 0/1 | --/-- |
| 26 | 0/2 | 2/5 | --/-- | --/-- | --/-- |
| 28a | 0/6 | 0/5 | 1/2 | --/-- | --/-- |
| 28b | 1/3 | 0/1 | 0/2 | 1/1 | --/-- |
| 28c | 1/6 | 2/7 | 1/3 | 1/1 | --/-- |
| 30a | 3/7 | 4/7 | 1/1 | 1/1 | 0/1 |
| 30b | 2/7 | 2/6 | 2/3 | 1/1 | --/-- |
| 30c | 3/7 | 1/3 | 0/6 | --/-- | 4/4 |
| 33 | --/-- | 0/2 | --/-- | 1/1 | --/-- |
| 34 | 4/12 | 5/9 | --/-- | 1/1 | --/-- |
| 40 | 0/6 | 0/8 | 0/2 | --/-- | 1/4 |
| 44 | 0/5 | 0/2 | 0/1 | 0/5 | 0/2 |
| 45 | 0/3 | --/-- | 0/1 | 1/4 | --/-- |
| Total | 27/122 | 22/75 | 19/59 | 21/34 | 10/24 |
| % Unmarked | 22.1 | 29.3 | 32.2 | 61.7 | 41.7 |

Table 5.3 Incidence of Past Tense Marking in Writing Based on Different Types of Irregular Forms

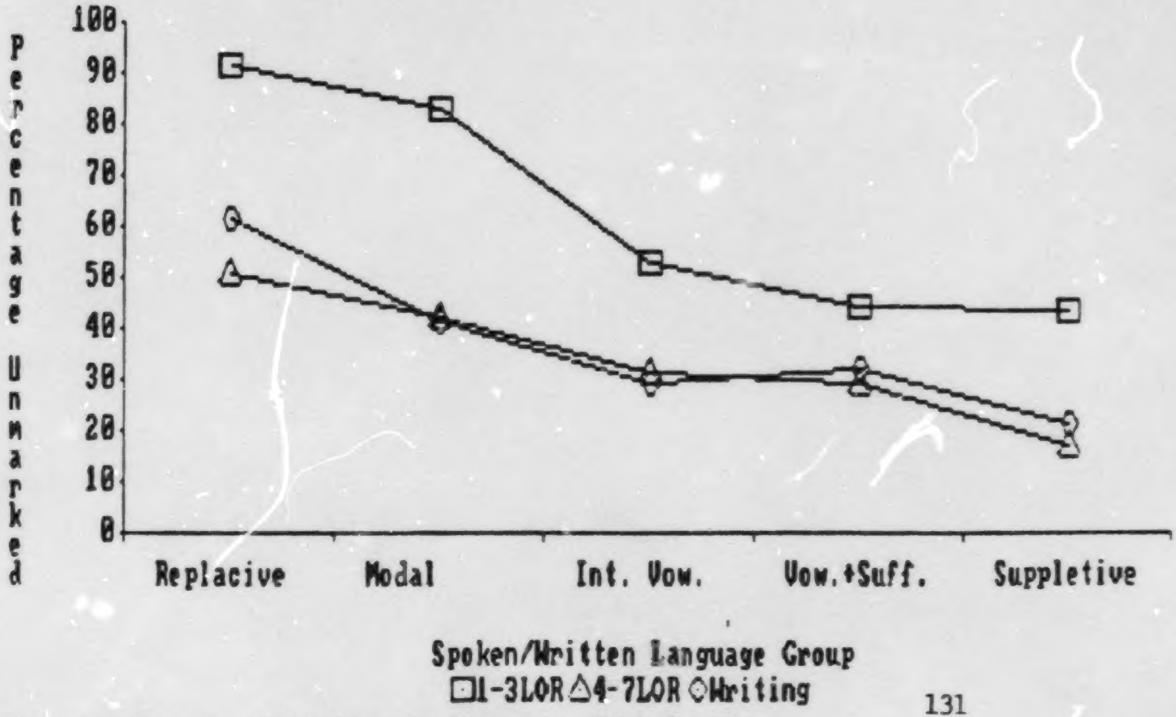


Fig. 5.2 Past Tense Marking by Irregular Verb Form

We see in Table 5.3 and Fig. 5.2. a pattern in the written language samples which matches the systematic relationships of the constraints found in spoken language. The figures are, in fact, strikingly close for the spoken language 4-7 LOR group and the writing sample. In both mediums of language, suppletive is the verb type with the least amount of unmarking and replacive the form with the most unmarking. The other verb types also show similar tendencies, in that modals are ranked second in their promotion of unmarking, and internal vowel change (including both simple vowel change and vowel change + suffix since there is no significant difference between the two types) falls between modals and suppletives in its effect on tense marking. Given the weakening of the general constraint between regular and irregular forms, we are somewhat surprised that this subclassification of irregular forms is as parallel as it is. There is certainly sufficient evidence to say that the constraint on irregular verb types holds up in the written language data.

Finally, we should say something about the extent to which the overall pattern of variability is reflective of the individual writers. In our corpus, there are only three writers who have adequate tokens for such consideration, given the different verb subclasses we have delimited, Writer 21 (with 77 cases of potential past tense marking, Writer 22 (with 74 cases), and Writer 30 (with 74 cases when the three different samples are combined). Although some of the types (viz. modal and replacive) still have limited tokens, it is possible to get an indication from these speakers as to the kind and extent of individual variation. In Fig. 5.3 we have indicated the distribution of tense unmarking for regular verbs and four categories of irregular forms: suppletives, internal vowel change, replacives, and modals. For internal vowel change, we have combined forms marking past with internal vowel change alone (e.g. *come/came*, *run/ran*) and those with a suffix (e.g. *keep/kept*, *leave/left*) since our previous tabulations did not indicate any significant difference between these types.

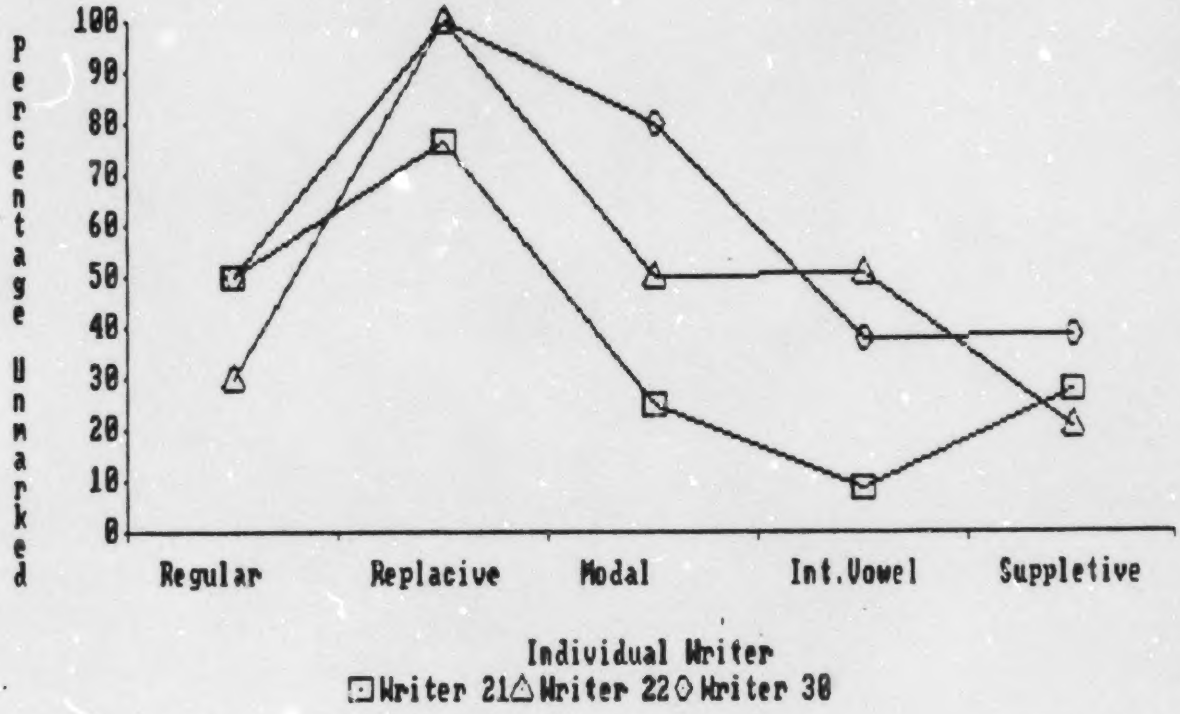


Fig. 5.3 Tense Unmarking by Verb Type for Three Individual Writers

As with spoken language, there are both similarities and differences among the individual speakers. As expected, the major difference between written and spoken language for these writers is the relationship of regular verb forms with the different irregular forms. For each of the three writers, there is at least one category of irregular verb type which has a higher incidence of unmarking than the regular forms, a relationship which is at odds with our finding on the relationship of regular and irregular forms in spoken language. The weakening of the regular/irregular constraint is clearly substantiated for individual writers, as was suggested in our composite profile. Writing is, however, much like spoken language at the 1-3 LOR stage in that there can be individual variation in the ordering of irregular verb type effects. Thus, Writer 21 has a relatively low incidence of unmarking for internal vowel change forms and a higher incidence for suppletive forms whereas Writer 22 reverses this pattern. As with spoken language, we must mention the possible role of the lexical items in this regard. For example, a number of unmarked forms for Writer 21 are contracted _'s_ forms in structures such as _When the war was over and Ashley's coming back_ or _After a few years she's married Charles Hamilton_, which might be learned as a kind of "frozen form" not subject to the expected tense marking of other _be_ forms (and to some extent _have_ forms). For Writer 22, 13 out of 20 cases of _doesn't/didn't_ are unmarked for tense, but only five out of 15 other internal change forms are unmarked. It thus suggests that there may be a strong lexical component operative for some writers, in which particular forms are relatively unaffected by tense marking whereas others are affected. We observed this to some extent in spoken language, particularly at some of the earlier stages of acquisition (viz., the 1-3 LOR group). Given the role of rote learning that that typically is emphasized in the acquisition of writing skills (cf. Wolfram 1984), we would, in fact, be surprised not to see a strong lexical dimension in the earlier stages of the writing process. We find the lexical dimension not only for irregular forms, but regular forms as well. Thus, Writer 21 has four of five case of _love_ unmarked, but only six of 15 cases of other regular forms unmarked. We would expect that the medium difference would stimulate a stronger lexical component in writing than in speech, and that is what our preliminary observations indicate.

In summary, our data suggest that one of the major constraints on spoken language tense unmarking, that of regular versus irregular forms, may be weakened considerably in written language. We hypothesize that this is due to the role of rote learning in acquiring writing that takes speakers beyond their phonological spoken language capabilities in producing such forms. (No doubt this is aided by the considerable attention most ESL teachers give to "the _-ed_" forms.) With respect to the different types of irregular forms, constraints similar to spoken language appear to be operative for written language, with perhaps more individual deviation from the composite group profile. We also suggest that the role of the lexical item as opposed to structural type is heightened, due to nature of the medium (with its increased focus on language form) and the way in which it is typically taught and learned (viz. the strong role of rote learning).

### Tense Sequencing and Higher Order Constraints

In the previous section, we examined only the constraints on tense marking related to surface form. We must now extend this analysis to consider units beyond the surface form of the verb, just as we did for spoken language. Although our investigation of spoken language showed higher order constraints to be relatively insignificant, we cannot simply assume apriori that this finding covers written language as well. There are too many differences between the language registers to make such an assumption. We have already seen that there are both similarities and differences in the surface constraints when we compare spoken and written language.

In the examination of higher level constraints for writing, we naturally want to consider some of the same constraints that we investigated for spoken language. One of the major constraints examined for spoken language was that of narrative foregrounding ("any clause that pushes the event line forward") and backgrounding ("clauses which set the scene, make digressions, change the normal sequence of events, or give evaluative remarks"). This distinction in narratives follows the study of Kumpf (1984:141) which suggests that foreground action is expressed with unmarking and background action with "many marked forms". To investigate this hypothesis for writing, we have broken down the illustrative passage given earlier (Writer

21) in terms of foregrounding and backgrounding, along with a subcategorization on the basis of the major surface forms delimited as relevant in the previous section. In the running tabulation, the first column denotes foregrounding (F) and backgrounding (B), the second column past tense marking (1) or unmarking (O), and the third column surface form (R=regular, S=suppletive, I=internal change, H=replacive, typically have, and M=modal). Following the text is a summary of the incidence of unmarking for the various verb types in terms of foreground and background.

| Gone with the Wind | F/B | M/U | FORM |
|---|---|---|---|
| "Gone with the Wind" is an exciting love | B | NT | S |
| story, *has written by Margaret Mitchell. This | B | O | H |
| story *has begun on a bright April afternoon of | F | O | H |
| 1861, in Atlanta, Georgia. | | | |
| The main character in this story was Scarlett | B | 1 | S |
| O'Hara. She was one of the Coast Aristocrat of | B | 1 | S |
| French descent. Her father was Gerald O'Hara, the | B | 1 | S |
| owner of Tara. Tara is a plantation which has a | B,B | O,O | S,H |
| length of more than 200 miles. And the important | | | |
| characters in this story are Melly Hamilton, | | NT | |
| Charles Hamilton, Rhett, Ellen O'Hara, Ashley | | | |
| Wilkes and much much more. | | | |
| Scarlet O'Hara was a beautiful, charmy girl. | B | 1 | S |
| But she was also an unfortunate girl. This story | B | 1 | S |
| *has written about her during the civil war between | B | O | H |
| Southerners and the Yankees. Scarlett *was fallen | F | 1 | H |
| in love with Ashley Wilkes, but he was going to | B | 1 | S |
| *married his cousin which is Melly Hamilton. | | NT | |
| Scarlett became miserable from that time. After a | F | 1 | I |
| few years, *she's married | F | O | H |
| Charles Hamilton, and hope this will make her forget | B,B | O,O | R,M |
| about Ashley Wilkes. After two months of living with | | | |
| Charles, she had a baby, and Charles's dead in the war, | F,B | 1,O | H,S |
| by pneumonia. But anyway she's still loved Ashley in | B, | O | H |
| secrete and noone could understand. During this war | B | 1 | M |
| time, all ladies lived very lonely. Melly (Charles's | B | 1 | R |
| sister) always stay with Scarlett and comfort her. | B,B | O,O | R,R |
| Melly was a very nice little girl. She had a | B,B | 1,1 | S,H |
| shaped-face with black eyes, pointed of chin and square | | | |
| of jaw. She loved Scarlett so much. But cause of love, | B | 1 | R |
| Scarlett always wish that Melly would dead so she | B,B | O,1 | R,M |
| could have Ashley, and Melley *has never known that. | B,B | 1,O | M,H |
| Year after year, cause of money, miserable, | | | |

| | |
|---|---|
| love, Scarlett *had been remarried. The man was | F,B 1,1 H,S |
| Rhett, who she was not only didn't want to *married | B,B 1,1 S,I |
| Rhett, but always remembored Asley. She love him | B,B 1,0 R,R |
| very much. But he would never answer her. | B 1 M |
| When the war was over, and Ashley's coming | B,F 1,0 S,S |
| back. Melly *has been miscarriage and dead. And | B 0 H |
| now everyone was miserable. Before Scarlett wish | B,B 1,0 S,R |
| that Melly would die so she can have Ashley, now | B,B 1,0 M,M |
| Ashley was coming back and Melly was dead, but she | B,B 1,1 S,S |
| didn't want him any more. Everything was reveal, | B,F 1,1 I,S |
| and Rhett knew everything, now is the time he | B,B 1,0 I,S |
| understand about his wife. At last he decided to | B,B 0,1 I,R |
| go back to his own place of birth, and forget | |
| everything. He try to find his own new life, and | F 0 R |
| people whom he's never known before. He would | B,B 0,1 S,M |
| enjoy hunting, and fishing in the rest of his life. | |
| This happened make Scarlett felt crazy. | B,B 1,1 R,I |
| At last Scarlett felt so guilty; she thought | F,B 1,1 I,I |
| the only man he love was Rhett. But now | B,B 1,0 R,S |
| is too late for her to say that, when | B 0 S |
| she already lost Rhett, the man who love her so | B,B 1,0 I,R |
| much, and she has never answer him by the nice | B 0 H |
| words. She has always run along with the man who | B 0 H |
| never love her. | B 0 R |
| After reading the story, I thought it was so | B,B 1,1 I,S |
| sad , but I liked it. It helped me learn a lot of | B,B 1,1 R,R |
| new words, which I haven't known before. It helped | B,B 0,1 H,R |
| me to practice in reading. This was the most | B 1 S |
| interesting story I've ever read. It took me a | B 1 I |
| long time to sit there and read. Sometimes I | |
| laught and sometimes cried. | B B 1,1 R,R |

| | FOREGROUND | | BACKGROUND | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Unm/Tot | | Unm/Tot | |
| Regular | 1/1 | | 9/19 | |
| Suppletive | 1/3 | | 6/22 | |
| Internal | 0/2 | | 1/9 | |
| Replacive | 2/4 | | 8/9 | |
| Modal | -- | | 2/8 | |
| Total | 4/10 | 40.0.% | 26/67 | 38.8% |

Table 5.4 Incidence of Tense Marking by Foreground and Background: Writer 21.

Although there are not very many potential cases of foreground verbs compared with background, it seems fairly obvious that there is no significant constraint on unmarking based on this distinction. A similar tabulation for Writer 22, as reported in the Table 5.5, indicates a similar distribution of tense marking.

| | FOREGROUND | | BACKGROUND | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Unm/Tot | | Unm/Tot | |
| Regular | 3/6 | | 3/14 | |
| Suppletive | -- | | 3/14 | |
| Internal | 2/8 | | 16/27 | |
| Replacive | 1/1 | | 2/2 | |
| Modal | -- | | 1/1 | |
| Total | 6/15 | 40.0% | 25/59 | 42.4% |

Table 5.5. Incidence of Tense Marking by Foreground and Background: Writer 22

As with Writer 21, Writer 22 has many more instances of backgrounding than foregrounding (perhaps a function of the written medium to some extent) but there seem to be adequate numbers to reject the hypothesis that tense marking in written language is constrained by this dimension of narrative discourse organization. We have already seen that Kumpf's hypothesis had to be rejected for spoken language when the interactive effect of the surface forms was considered. We come to the same conclusion with respect to the written medium.

Another hypothesis that has to be considered in terms of written language concerns episodic boundaries in the narrative, following Godfrey (1980) and Wolfson (1983). In Figure 5.4, we have plotted the tense marking patterns for Writer 21 in terms of tense sequencing and episodes within the discourse. In the definition of episodes here, both boundaries within the narrative itself (ie. different episodes in the story of Gone with the Wind) and the matrix discourse (i.e the writer's description of the setting and subjective comments about the story) that surrounds the narrative are delimited without distinction in terms of episode type, even though a different analysis might distinguish between the the supra-discourse and embedded narrative. Different episodes are marked by letters and the boundaries are indicated by broken lines.

```
----------Marked----------------Unmarked---
                      A
                             H  has written
                       ------H--has begun
S--was----------------B
S  was                C
S  was
                             S  is
                             H  has
S--was----------------
S  was                D
                       ------H--has
S--was----------------E
S  was                F

I  became
                       ------S--'s married
                      G      R  hope
                             M  will
H  had
                             S  's dead
                             S  's loved
M  could
R--lived--------------
                      H      R  stay
                             R  comfort
S  was
H--had----------------
R  loved              I
                             R  wish
M  would
M  could
                             H  has
H  had
S  was
S  was
I  didn't
R  remembered
                             R  love
M  would
```

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| S__was________________ | | |
| | J | S 's coming |
| | | H has |
| S was | | |
| | | R wish |
| M would | | |
| | | M can |
| S was | | |
| S was | | |
| I didn't | | |
| S__was________________ | | |
| I knew | K | |
| | | S is |
| | | I understand |
| R decided | | |
| | | R try |
| | | H 's known |
| M would | | |
| R happened | | |
| I felt | | |
| I__felt________________ | | |
| I thought | L | |
| | | R love |
| S was | | |
| | | S is |
| I lost | | |
| | | R love |
| | | H has |
| | | H has |
| | | R love |
| I__thought_____________ | | |
| S was | M | |
| R liked | | |
| R helped | | |
| | | H haven't |
| R helped | | |
| S was | | |
| I took | | |
| R laught | | |
| R cried | | |

Fig. 5.4. Tense Sequencing Within Different Episodes: Writer 21

For the most part, tense shifting in the above discourse does not appear to be closely correlated with episodic bounderies. Instead, the predominant factor seems to be the surface form. There is, however, one case in which the tense shifting pattern may show a correlation with episode structure, namely, the pattern in the final paragraph (M) and the penultimate paragraph (L) of the story. The penultimate paragraph gives the final details of the narrative, whereas the final paragrah gives the writer's reaction to the book, a clear break between the supra-discourse and the embedded narrative. In the penultimate paragraph, three regular forms (all of which are the verb love) a suppletive form, and two instances of have are unmarked for tense , whereas in the final paragraph five regular forms and two suppletives are marked for tense. The only instance of have in the final paragraph is, however, unmarked. The shifting of regular forms, along with the variable shift of suppletives, may qualify as a genuine case of tense sequencing related to episode structure, although even here we must be cautious, since only one verb form is involved in unmarking in the penultimate paragraph, and it is different from the regular forms in the final paragraph. We cannot rule out a simple lexical constraint related to the regular form love vis-a-vis other regular forms in this case. Nonetheless, this may be a case which is constrained by a shift within the discourse structure itself.

Another representative case of tense sequencing and episode structure is Writer 22's narrative report of Gone with the Wind. We have displayed this sequencing pattern in Fig. 5.5.

```
-----------------------------------------------
S  was                   Δ
S  were
                              H  has
S  were
S__was_________________
```

I did B
R wanted
I doen't [sic]
I doen't
-----S--is
C R love
I get
I doen't
R mary [sic]
I think
R love
I--heard----------------
I told D
R married
I doesn't
I said
I said
M couldn't

I thought
S were
I knew
I did
S was
I did not
R married
S--was------------------
I did
R pretended
R like
R hated
R wanted
M can
S was
I did not
I didn't
R--married-------------
E I doesn't
R wanted
I doesn't
I did not
I do
------I--got
F I doesn't
I get
S--was-----------------
G I get
I doen't
R--died----------------
R died H
I doen't
R died

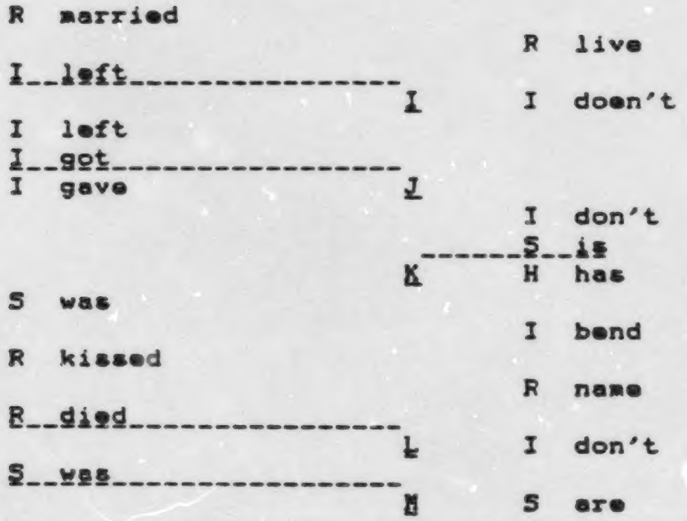

R married
R live
I left
I
I doesn't
I left
I got
I gave
J
I don't
S is
K
H has
S was
I bend
R kissed
R name
R died
L
I don't
S was
M
S are

Fig. 5.5. Tense Marking within Different Episodes: Writer 22

As with Writer 21, it is difficult to establish for Writer 22 the shifting of tenses related strictly to episode boundaries within the narrative. There are, however, a couple of instances in which there may be a pattern of systematic tense serialization. For example, in episode E, all cases of _did/didn't_ are marked for past whereas in episode F five of six instances of this form are unmarked. Similarly, in episode C all three cases of regular forms are unmarked, while in episode D the two cases of regular forms are marked. Also, three of four cases of internal change forms are unmarked in C whereas seven of eight cases are marked in D. This suggests that all the variability in unmarking cannot be simply attributed to surface form types. Some serialization may occur, in which unmarking or marking prevails over a sequence of forms within the narrative. Thus, the narrative begins with a string of seven forms, six of which are marked for past tense. The one form in this string that is unmarked is *have*, which is apparently quite resistent to marking regardless of the tense of surrounding verbs in a series. Then the narrative shifts, in the middle of episode *B*, to a string of nine consecutive cases of unmarking. The discourse again shifts back to marking, as 22 of the next 25 verb forms are marked for tense. In episode *F*, unmarking becomes predominant once again, as eight of the next 12 forms (episodes *F* and *G*) are unmarked. However, all eight of these forms involve internal vowel changes, and five of these are the one form *do/don't*. Overall figures for *do/don't* for Writer 22 show that it is quite suseptible to unmarking, as 13 of 20 cases of this form throughout the whole narrative are unmarked.

What are we to conclude from this examination of tense sequencing, episodes, and surface forms? Unfortunately, the evidence does not suggest a simple answer. Obviously, surface form, including the type of irregular and lexical choice to some extent, remains a major constraint. However, beyond this recognition, there appears to be some indication of patterned sequencing within the higher level discourse. Even when the surface forms are factored out, there is a clustering of marked or unmarked forms which is apparently not random. Surface forms being equal, there may be serialized shifts of marking and unmarking within the discourse. Such serialization does not correlate neatly with episode boundaries, but there may be occasions where tense shifting and sequencing is sensitive to higher level considerations, including the episode. Although some of the serialization patterns seem constrained by episodes, others do not, so that we cannot conclude that the shifts are simply a function of episodes. What precisely determines the shift cannot be unequivically determined, but the reasonable candidates include episode boundaries, surface form "triggers" (i.e. forms that have a high likelihood of unmarking apart from higher order considerations), preceding tense marking (i.e if a preceding form is unmarked, there is a greater likelihood that the next one will be unmarked as well, or vice versa), and "discourse fatigue" (i.e. forms that appear in the non-initial stages of the discourse as opposed to earlier stages where attention might be more directly focused on tense marking). There is limited evidence to suggest that all of these variables may make a contribution. While these various factors may contribute in some way to the shifting pattern, we still maintain that the surface form remains a major variable and that other variables probably are intervening rather than primary factors.

## Hyper-Tense Marking

Given the formality of the writing medium and the significant acquisitional hurdle imposed by the tense marking system of English, it is not surprising that the writing passages of some writers reveal a tendency to use "hyper-forms". The term hyper-form is used here to refer to any English item in which tense marking extends beyond the limits of the standard English rule, and covers cases of classical "hypercorrection" (with both a social and linguistic dimension, cf. DeCamp 1972) and strictly linguistic cases of rule generalization or regularization that may occur as a by-product of the language acquisition process. In the written language corpus, there are several different types of hyper-forms, some of which match those found in spoken language and some of which differ.

Pleonastic Tense Marking

One of the major types of written language hyper-forms which matches spoken language is pleonastic tense marking. In English, tense within the verb phrase is placed on the verb only if an auxiliary is not present. If an auxiliary is present, then the tense is placed on the first auxiliary within the verb phrase. Thus, a sentence such as She liked school marks tense on the verb because there is no surface auxiliary, but a sentence such as She didn't like school or She had been looking for an answer places the tense marking only on the first auxiliary in the verb phrase. A generalization of this rule marks the tense on both the verb and the auxiliary. This generalization is apparently found as a characteristic stage of tense marking acquisition in English regardless of language background (Burt and Kiparsky 1972:29-30; Wolfram 1974:160-162). We thus have cases of such marking found in both the written and spoken language samples of our subjects. Examples of such marking are represented in the following:

(1) a. ...When she knew that Ashley did married to Melanie, she was miserable, because Ashley did not married her, but married somebody that short...(Writer 22:p.2)

b. ...she doen't [sic] care about Ashley did not married her or not...(Writer 22:p.3)

As with spoken language, it appears that the form most likely to take pleonastic tense marking is the auxiliary did/didn't, although any auxiliary apparently may qualify for this process.

Another type of pleonastic tense marking involves the addition of a regular past tense suffix to an item which marks its past tense in an irregular formation.

> (2) ...I crepted along to the vacant land to see the basketball ...(Writer 23:p.1)

This type of "regularization" is actually a morphological process rather than a syntactic one, but one that can also be expected in both written and spoken language. In spoken language, it is sometimes possible to get pleonastic tense marking of this type with certain regular forms (e.g. /layktId/ 'likeded'; /lUktId/ 'lookeded'; /startIdId/ 'started') as well (Wolfram 1974:134ff), but we do not have any such cases in written language. This is probably related to the difference in spelling form versus spoken language, where the morphophonemic spelling of all regular phonological past tense forms as -ed militates against a reduplicated spelling (e.g.*likeded, *lookeded). In spoken language, some cases are obviously misanalyzed as ending in lexical /t/ or /d/ (i.e./lUkt/ or /laykt/ is considered the lexical entry to which the past tense suffix is added), in which case the /Id/ is added in accordance with the regular English rule.

## Tense Extension

Not all verb phrases in English carry tense marking of some type. Complement clauses, which are raised into the matrix sentence as a type of "infinitive", are not marked for tense, so that the verb go in a sentence such as She wanted to go or tell in She heard him tell the story are not marked for tense. As a type of rule generalization, however, such tenseless forms may be marked for tense by language learners. This tense marking pattern is documented in the following cases:

> (3) a. Yesterday, Harminder called me and she wanted to said "Hello" to you and wish you good health. (Writer 23: p.1)
>
> b. ...beside she wanted Melanie to died so that she can get married with Ashley (Writer 22: p.2)
>
> c. ...when Scarlett heard the twin brother told her that Ashley married to Melanie she doesn't believed it...(Writer 22: p.2)

Although this kind of tense extension appears to be more common in written language than spoken language, it can be documented in both language registers. Furthermore, this kind of rule generalization is hardly unique to Vietnamese English speakers; in fact it can be documented among L2 English language learners regardless of language background (Burt and Kiparsky 1972) and among speakers of non-mainstream varieties of English as well (Wolfram 1969).

### Auxiliary Hyper-Forms

One of the hyper patterns which we have not documented extensively in our spoken language corpus involves the use of hyper auxiliary forms. The major manifestations of this hyper-pattern include the use of one auxiliary in lieu of another (4) and the insertion of an auxiliary form when one is not required by the rules of standard English verb phrase formation (5).

(4) a. "Gone with the Wind" is an exciting love story, has written by Margaret Mitchell. (Writer 21: p.1)

b. The story has written about her during the civil war between Southerners and the Yankees. (Writer 21: p.1)

c. After that five minutes, she saw a boy playing card. She asked: [sic]
-Do you done your classwork?
-Yes, I done.
-Let me see. (Writer 23: p.1)

(5) a. Living in the reeducation camp in Vietnam is terrible. I had lived there for five years. (Writer 45: p.1)

b. Scarlett was fallen in love with Ashley Wilkes, but he was going to married his cousin which is Melly Hamilton (Writer 21: p.1)

c. After a few years, she's married Charles Hamilton, and hope her forget about Ashley Wilkes (Writer 21: p.1)

Although some of the examples given in (4) and (5) may be open to different interpretations in some instances, we find cases of do for a form of be, have for a form of be and be for have. Our examples of inserted auxiliaries involve forms of be and have. Interestingly, we have not found cases of hyper-auxiliary forms involving the modals.

The auxiliary switching and insertion we have found in our data seem to in[illegible] a genuine case of hypercorrection, where the inherent di[illegible]ies in using the various forms of the English auxiliary [illegible] the formal task of writing combine to produce somewhat erratic choices of the auxiliary. In learning English tense and aspect, the use of the auxiliary is certainly among the most difficult structures to acquire, requiring an understanding of temporal sequencing, aspect, and discourse rules. Writers may be aware of the inherent difficulty involved in mastering the structure and overcompensate by placing an inappropriate or unneeded auxiliary when confronted with a task as formal as writing. In spoken language, we have not encountered nearly as much auxiliary hyper-formation as we have in written language, but apparently there are such cases in the spoken language of some L2 learners of English (cf. Burt and Kiparsky 1972:30-35).

### Discourse Hyper-Forms

Finally, we should mention a pattern of hyper-tense marking which seem most appropriately described in terms of the overall discourse structure. In these instances, we have a discourse setting which does not involve past tense. The discourse may involve a current or future event vis-a-vis past event, or even an expository discourse of some type. For example, consider the following written response on the theme on future aspirations.

> (6) When I grow up, I *wanted* to be a dentist or international studies. Today many peoples *came* to my room, some people *needed* to clean their tooths, some needs to take the tooths out, some *needed* braces in their teeths. The children all cry when they have to take their teeths out, all this work *took* me 7 hours.
>
> Maybe I *wanted* to be a international studies to go around the world I love to go around the world is fun to me. I can go anywhere I *wanted* to go. I have to interviewer [sic] peoples from other country. (Writer 33: p.2)

In a similar essay about a future event, Writer 34 starts a conjecture as to the nature of World War III with a setting of the story in the past tense (One day there *was* a big world war III. In the world. In July-4-1999 [sic]). Another writer (45), in an expository essay on why people emmigrate, lapses into a past tense frame in setting up parallel generic explanations, as in (7).

> (7) First of all, students all over the world have a dream when they grow up and have an education...
> The economical conditions are also attractive for people from another country...
> Finally, people had to leave their fatherland because of political reasons...
> It is clear that people move to a new country have common reasons... (Writer 45: p.1-3)

Instances of past tense marking such as those is (6) and (7) are again best viewed as products of the special concern that writers may have about tense marking. Unsure of which discourses require tense marking, writers may thus hypercorrect to mark past tense on non-past time or generic, expository discourses. In this case, however, the stimulus does not derive from the peculiarities of structures within the sentence, but a higher level of structuring. The formality of the writing situation is no doubt an impetus to the kind of overcompensation that causes some writers to lapse into such cases, but we have found cases of this kind in our spoken language sample as well. In spoken language, we found a strong lexical component (cf. Chapter Three) operative in this kind of hyper-formation, but the lexical constraint, although apparent, does not appear quite so strong in written language.

Our brief discussion of hyper-forms in written language tense forms shows several kinds of forms that need to be distinguished. Some appear to derive solely from the nature of language learning and the kinds of speaker/writer hypotheses involving rule generalization or regularization with regards to tense marking in English. Others seem to be derived from the peculiar attention focused on language in more formal usages such as writing. The latter are less likely to match the less formal sample of spoken language that typify our oral language sample than the former. We have also seen that hyper-forms involve several different levels of language, including morphological formation, syntactic patterning, and larger discourse level considerations. A realistic assessment of the hyper-forms must necessarily take into account a wide range of linguistic levels and socio-psychological hypotheses available to a writer attempting to master English tense marking.

# CHAPTER SIX

# CONCLUSION

In the preceding chapters we have explored the variable nature of tense marking in interlanguage by examining the patterns of tense marking exhibited by native Vietnamese speakers learning English as a second language. Our major focus has been upon the kinds of linguistic variables that influence the systematic variability of the tense marking, in particular, the role of surface level phonological and morphological constraints vis-a-vis the higher level constraints of discourse organization. The systematic variability of tense marking has been investigated in both spoken and written language, and some provocative similarities and differences have been uncovered.

A secondary consideration of our study has been the role of social variables such as length of residency (primarily as a rough approximation of stages of acquisition), age, and gender. Since we have found very little new or different from traditional studies of these social variables in L2 acquisition, we shall not summarize our findings here. Instead, we shall focus on our findings concerning the linguistic variables, since some of our conclusions fly in the face of current trends and emphases in L2 studies.

## Surface Constraints

Perhaps the major conclusion of this study is that surface constraints are primary effects on the systematic variability of tense marking in interlanguage systems. By surface form here we mean phonological shape and environment, regular and irregular morphological formation, type of irregular verb formation, and lexical choice. In spoken language, we have found that there is a significant constraint based on the differentiation of regular and irregular forms, with irregular forms favoring past tense marking over regular ones. We hypothesized that this is due, in part, to the role of rote memorization vis-a-vis cognitive patterning as these notions are manifested in irregular and regular linguistic formation, and, in part, due to the susceptibility of particular phononological shapes in regular forms to certain phonological processes (e.g. consonant cluster reduction, final consonant deletion, etc.). We presume that the former explanation is a universal one and the latter one specific to the English morphological process of past tense suffixation. There is ample evidence from other studies (e.g. Brown 1973; Krashen 1982) to suggest that language acquisition typically proceeds from the initial acquisition of a subset of irregular forms as rote items to the acquisition of regular patterns. Along the way, there is an infusion of lexical selectivity that follows some general psycholinguistic principles (e.g. frequently occurring forms are more likely to be selected than infrequent ones), but is also subject to individual choice to some extent.

Within the irregular forms, there are constraints on variability based on the way the irregular verb form is constructed. We thus found that suppletive forms typically reveal a higher incidence of tense marking than forms constructing their past tense through internal vowel change, which, in turn, have a higher likelihood of tense marking than forms constructing their past tense through a final replacive consonant. We observed that the patterned variability seems to follow a principle of saliency not unlike the principle of perceptual saliency found in other language acquisition studies in that the more phonologically obtrusive the form is, the higher the likelihood of grammatical marking. Again, we cautiously hypothesize that the saliency principle is a universal one (perhaps more of a perceptual psycholinguistic than cognitive linguistic principle), but the way in which it applies to English tense morphologization is quite language-specific.

Our findings with respect to the role of surface phenomena are not particularly startling, and seem consonant with more general observations concerning the dynamics of L2 acquisition. In fact, the most surprising aspect of our investigation is not the research findings themselves, but the fact that the tradition of research on L2 English language acquisition has either ignored or downplayed the role of such transparent and apparently natural factors.

## Higher Level Constraints

Although the surface constraints on tense marking seem quite obvious and transparent, we are somewhat surprised that these considerations have been virtually ignored in recent studies of tense marking in L2 acquisition. Perhaps a major reason for this lack of attention can be attributed indirectly to the current emphasis on higher level constraints on tense marking in interlanguage (e.g. Godfrey 1980; Wolfson 1982; Kumpf 1984). By higher level here, we mean considerations relating to discourse organization, including the internal structure of the discourse and the discourse topic or genre. The studies cited above all maintain that such considerations are primary constraints in interlanguage tense marking variability, and that other factors are, at best, secondary. Our empirical investigation, including the replication of studies on the discourse parameters of foreground and background, episodic structure within the discourse, and tense sequencing continuity, simply has not supported claims that these factors are consistent and primary variables in accounting for tense marking patterns in interlanguage. Our position is not intended to discount the potential of higher order considerations, but to put these factors in proper perspective within a model of interlanguage organization. Without factoring out the effect of surface-level constraints, any claim concerning the primacy of discourse constraints on tense marking remains highly suspect.

## Spoken and Written Language Tense Marking

One of the major dimensions of our study was the comparison of tense marking patterns in spoken and written language. Our concern was how parallel the registers are in terms of their patterns of tense marking variation. The empirical evidence supports the conclusion that the two language registers are NOT isomorphic. In some ways the constraints on variability are parallel but in other ways they can be quite divergent. For example, we found that the major distinctions in terms of irregular verb forms (e.g. suppletive versus internal vowel change) were parallel in both spoken and written language, but that the distinction between regular and irregular forms was not nearly as clear-cut in written language as it was in spoken language. We explained this difference on the basis of different strategies used in learning spoken and written language forms. For example, in written language it is possible to attach a single form, -*ed*, to form past tense on regular verbs. In spoken language, the regular form, in its various productive phonological manifestations, is typically acquired as a cognitive pattern. Furthermore, there is evidence that the rote learning of some aspects of the English spelling system apparently can compensate for the generalized application of phonological transfer.

The important conclusion from our observations is that we can expect both similarities and differences in the systematic constraints on variability in written and spoken language. We are now at a point where we need to explicate some principles that can adequately explain the basis of these similarities and differences rather than simply observe them.

Our data also indicated that written language was somewhat more susceptible to higher order constraints on tense marking than spoken language, once the surface constraints are factored out. This conclusion, however, is based on somewhat limited data, and needs to be substantiated further as an empirically justifiable claim. Assuming that further investigation supports this observation, we will need to offer a reasonable explanation as to why the written language medium would be more susceptible to higher order constraints than the spoken language medium. At this point, however, such speculation is somewhat premature.

### Hyper-Forms

Both spoken and written interlanguage exhibit hyper-tense marking, in which a rule for tense marking is extended beyond the target language boundaries of the rule. Pleonastic tense marking involves the marking of tense in a pre-verbal auxiliary as well as the verb (e.g. *She didn't made it*); a special kind of morphological pleonasm involves the addition of the regular suffix to a form marked irregularly (e.g. *broked*, *crepted*), or even isolated cases of "double regularization" (e.g. /layktId/ 'likeded'; /lUktId/ 'lookeded'). Another kind of hyper-form involves the extension of tense marking on a clausal level, typically applying to complement clauses such as *She wanted to* *went to America* or *They heard the twin brother told her that Ashley married*. This hyper-form, along with pleonastic tense marking, involves a simple type of rule generalization, and both are found to some extent in spoken and written language.

Two other types of hyper-forms are found more characterstically in written than in spoken language. One type involves the specialized extension of auxiliary forms, in which an auxiliary form may be inserted (e.g. *After two hours, she has went to the store*) or one auxiliary form substituted for another (e.g. *The story has written about the Civil War*). The second type involves "discourse hyper-forms"-- instances in which a non-past discourse is placed in a past tense context. We hypothesized that these cases are more in line with the classical definition of hypercorrection (DeCamp 1972) in that they necessarily involve both a social and linguistic dimension. We do not claim that they are unique to written language *per se*, but probably a function of the fact that the written language samples in our corpus are of a more formal nature (typically classroom assignments) than the spoken language samples (typically informal conversational dyads).

The kinds of hyper-forms we uncovered here seem to be quite in line with those typically found in interlanguage tense marking (cf. Burt and Kiparsky 1972), presumably because they derive from general principles of language acquisition in its social context.

## Tense Marking and Second Language Pedagogy

Finally, we should say something about language pedagogy and the dynamics of tense marking in interlanguage. In some respects, our findings reveal patterns that are consonant with the way in which verb forms typically have been approached in the context of the ESL classroom. Irregular forms are taught as lexical items, along with the teaching of regular patterns. Some of this instructional lexical selectivity may, in fact, be reflected in the individual differences found across subjects with respect to particular irregular forms. Are the patterns we have found here then simply a direct reflection of how tense marking in English has been taught to various subjects in the sample?

Although we do not have extensive profiles on the exposure of our subjects to formal instruction in English, the majority of them have had at least limited formal training in English. Notwithstanding some influence on the learning of particular forms, we maintain that the uniformity of some of the patterns is reflective of L2 acquisition regardless of formal instruction in English. For example, the priority of the irregular over regular past tense forms in the earlier stages of acquisition is consonant with natural language acquisition rather than with the way formal L2 instruction takes place, where regular forms are typically taught prior to the irregular forms. Furthermore, the application of the saliency principle is not necessarily consonant with the sequencing of formal instruction. If formal instruction in English were a primary variable we would expect more diversity in the patterning of tense marking than we have observed here, given the fact that the subjects represent a wide range of exposure to formal instruction in English. Instead, we find some individual differences with respect to lexical items, but a rather impressive regularity across subjects in the major patterns of systematic variability. Our conclusion at this point is that formal instruction in English is not a primary factor accounting for variability in tense marking.

A pedagogy aimed at matching the natural sequencing in the L2 acquisition of tense marking would not be as drastically different from the traditional approach to teaching tense as we might imagine. In fact, attention to the saliency principle and an accomodation of the sequencing of irregular and regular forms to match the observed order would probably align instruction fairly closely with the observed facts of tense marking in interlanguage. This observation is not intended as an endorsement of traditional methodologies for teaching English as a second language, but simply a comment on how tense marking structures itself in interlanguage. Whatever methodology is ultimately endorsed, we would reasonably expect it to be cognizant of how tense marking variably proceeds through interlanguage, and incorporate this understanding into the instructional presentation of the English tense marking system.

## REFERENCES

Bailey, C.-J. N. 1973. Variation and Linguistic Theory. Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics.

Bailey, N., C. Madden and S. Krashen. 1974. "Is There a 'Natural Sequence' In Adult Second Language Learning?" Language Learning 21:235-243.

Baugh, J. 1979. Linguistic Style Shifting in Black English. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania.

Berko, J. 1958. "The Child's Learning of English Morphology." Word 14: 150-177.

Brown, R. 1973. A First Language. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Burt, M. and C. Kiparsky. 1972. The Gooficon: A Repair Manual for English. Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House.

Cedergren, H. and D. Sankoff. 1974. "Variable Rules: Performance as a Statistical Reflection of Competence." Language 50:333-355.

Chafe, W. L. 1972. "Discourse structure and human knowledge." In: Freedle, R. O., and J. B. Carroll (eds.), Language Comprehension and the Acquisition of Knowledge. Washington, D.C.: V.H. Winston & Sons.

Christion, D., W. Wolfram, and D. Hatfield. 1983. Adolescent and Young Adult English of Vietnamese Refugees. Final Report, National Institute of Education, Grant No. NIE-G-81-0122.

Corder, S. P. 1975. "Simple Codes' and the Source of the Second Language Learner's Initial Heuristic Hypothesis." Paper presented at the Colloque 'Theoretical Models in Applied Linguistics' IV, Universite de Neuchatel.

Dam Trung Phap. 1980. "The Indochinese Refugees' Cultural Background." San Antonio: Intercultural Development Research Association.

Dickerson, L. 1975. "The Learner's Interlanguage as a System of Variable Rules." TESOL Quarterly 9:401-407.

Dickerson, W. 1976. "The Psycholinguistic Unity of Language Learning and Language Change." Language Learning 26:215-231.

Dulay, H. and M. K. Burt. 1974a. "Natural Sequences in Child Second Language Acquisition." Language Learning 24:37-53.

_____. 1974b. "A New Perspective in the Creative Construction Process in Child Second Language Acquisition." Language Learning 24:253-278.

Fasold, R. W. 1971. "Minding your Z's and D's: Distinguishing Syntactic and Phonological Rules." In Papers from the Seventh Regional Meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Circle. Chicago, IL: Chicago Linguistic Circle. 360-367.

_____. 1972. *Tense Marking in Black English: A Linguistic and Social Analysis*. Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics.

Frith, M. 1977. *Second Language Learning: A Study of Form and Function at Two Stages of Developing Interlanguages*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Linguistics Club.

Godfrey, D. L. 1980. "A Discourse Analysis of Tense in Adult ESL Monologues." In: Larsen-Freeman, D. (ed.), *Discourse Analysis in Second Language Research*. Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House.

Guy, Gregory. 1980. "Variation in the Group and Individual: the Case of Final Stop Deletion." In: W. Labov (ed.), *Locating Language in Time and Space*. New York, NY: Academic Press.

Haines, D., D. Rutherford and P. Thomas. 1981. "Family and Community among Vietnamese Refugees." In: Stein, B. and S. M. Tomasi (eds.), *Refugees Today*. International Migration Review Volume 15.

Hakuta, K. 1976. "Becoming Bilingual: A Case Study of a Japanese Child Learning English as a Second Language." *Language Learning* 26:321-351.

Hale, T. & E. Budar. 1970. "Are TESOL classes the only answer?" *Modern Language Journal*. 54:462-487.

Hatfield, D. Forthcoming. *Tense Marking in the Spoken English of Vietnamese Refugees*. Ph.D. Dissertation, Georgetown University.

*History and Culture of Vietnam: An Introduction*. n.d. New York: World Relief Refugee Services.

Hoard, J. E. and C. Sloat. 1973. "English Irregular Verbs." *Language* 49:107-120.

Houck, N., J. Robertson, S. Krashen. 1978. "On the Domain of the Conscious Grammar: Morpheme Orders for Corrected and Uncorrected ESL Student Transcription." *TESOL Quarterly*. 12:335-339.

Krashen, S. 1978. "Individual Variation in the Use of the Monitor." In: W. Ritchie (ed.), *Principles of Second Language Learning*. New York,NY: Academic Press.

_____. 1981. *Second Language Acquisition and Second Language Learning*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

_____. 1982. *Principles and Practice in Second Language Learning*. New York, NY: Pergamon Press.

Kreeft, J. E. 1984. *Dialogue Journal Writing and the Acquisition of Grammatical Morphology in English as a Second Language*. Ph.D. Dissertation, Georgetown University.

Kumpf, L. 1984. "Temporal Systems and Universality in Interlanguage: A Case Study." In: F. Eckman, L. Bell and D. Nelson (eds.), *Universals of Second Language Acquisition*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Labov, W. 1969. "Contraction, Deletion and Inherent Variability of the English Copula." Language 45:715-762.

_____. 1972. Sociolinguistic Patterns. (Conduct and Communication, No. 4) Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Larsen-Freeman, D. 1975. The Acquisition of Grammatical Morphemes by Adult Learners of English as a Second Language. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Michigan.

Moore, M. and K. Dumas. 1983. "Inside the Fighting: Vietnamese Blame Violence on Frustrations." The Washington Post, August 14, 1983.

Natalicio, Diana S. and Luiz F. Natalicio. 1971. "A Comparative Study of English Pluralization by Native and Non-native English Speakers." Child Development 42:1302-1306.

Quirk, R. and S. Greenbaum. 1973. A Concise Grammar of Contemporary English. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.

Rosansky, E. J. 1975. "The Critical Period for the Acquisition of Language: Some Cognitive Development Considerations." Working Papers on Bilingualism. 6:93-102.

Sankoff, D. 1978. Linguistic Variation: Models and Methods. New York: Academic Press.

Sato, C. 1983. "Phonological Processes in Second Language Acquisition: Another Look at Interlanguage Syllable Structure." Paper presented at 17th Annual TESOL Convention. Toronto, Canada. March, 1983.

Schiffrin, D. 1981. "Tense Variation in Narrative." Language 57:45-62.

Schumann, J. 1975. "Affective Factors and the Problem of Age in Second Language Acquisition." Language Learning 25:209-235.

_____. 1978. The Pidginization Process: A Model for Second Language Acquisition. Rowley, MA: Newbury House Publishers, Inc.

Tarone, E. 1980. "Some Influences on the Syllable Structure of Interlanguage Phonology." International Review of Applied Linguistics 18:139-152.

Thompson, L. C. 1965. A Vietnamese Grammar. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Whiteman, M. R. 1976. Dialect Influence and the Writing of Black and White Working Class Americans. Ph.D. Dissertation, Georgetown University.

Wolfram, W. 1973. "On What Basis Variable Rules?" In: R. W. Fasold and R. W. Shuy (eds.), Studies in New Ways of Analysing English. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.

_____. 1978. "Contrastive Linguistics and Social Lectology." Language Learning 28:1-28.

_____. 1984. "A Preliminary Investigation of Tense Marking." In: W. Wolfram and D. Hatfield, Tense Marking in Second Language Learning: Patterns of Spoken and Written English. Final Report, NIE Grant No. NIE-G-83-0035.

_____. 1984b. "Unmarked Tense in American Indian English." American Speech 59:31-50.

Wolfram, W. and D. Christian. 1976. Appalachian Speech. Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics.

Wolfram, W., D. Christian, W. Leap and L. Potter. 1979. Variability in the English of Two Indian Communities and Its Effect on Reading and Writing. Final Report, NIE Grant No. NIE-G-77-0006.

Wolfram, W. and R. W. Fasold. 1974. The Study of Social Dialects in American English. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Wolfram, W. and M. F. Whiteman. 1971. "The Role of Dialect Interference in Composition." The Florida FL Reporter 9:34-38, 59.

Wolfson, N. 1978. "A Feature of Performed Narrative: The Conversational Historical Present." Language in Society 7:215-237.

_____. 1979. "The conversational historical present alternation." Language 55:168-182.

_____. 1982. "On Tense Alternation and the Need for Analysis of Native Speaker Usage in Second Language Acquisition." Language Learning 32:53-68.

APPENDIX A

## Adult Questionnaire

### I. Current Life

1. Do you have any children? (ages, sex, etc.)

2. How do you spend a typical day now? What are some of the things you have to do?

3. Do you like to watch TV? What are some of your favorite TV programs? Can you tell me about one of the recent ones you saw? What happened? What TV shows do your children like to watch? Can you tell me about them?

4. Do you like music? What kind of music do you like? Why? Do you have a favorite singer or group? What are they like? Can you tell me about the music that your children listen to?

5. Do you have a lot of relatives living around here? Do you get together for holidays like Tet? Can you remember one of these times that was particularly fun? What happened?

6. (if ESL student) Are there special things that happen in your Englisn classes that you really like?

7. Are your best friends mostly American or mostly Vietnamese? Was it hard to get to know Americans? Why? How did you do it?

8. Are your neighbors Americans or Vietnamese (or other Asians, etc.)? Do you know them very well? Which ones? What kinds of things do you do together?

9. What kind of groups (religious, community, etc.) do you belong to? What kind of activities do they have?

10. What kinds of jobs would you like your children to be able to have? Education?

### II. Life in Vietnam

1. When did you leave Vietnam? Can you tell me about your life there?

2. What kind of school did you go to in Vietnam? How was it different from schools in America? What did the boys wear? What did the girls wear? What subjects did you study? What were your teachers like?

3. Describe the city or town you lived in.

4. What kind of work did you do in Vietnam? What kind of work did your family members do?

5. Do you remember ever getting lost as a child? What happened? How about brothers or sisters who got lost? Did any of your children ever get lost? Have you gotten lost since you've been here? What happened? Has anyone else in your family gotten lost since they've been here?

6. Do you know any good Vietnamese stories or folktales? Can you tell me one? What stories do you tell your children?

7. Can you tell me about leaving Vietnam? Did you spend any time in a refugee camp? Where? Can you describe it?

## III. Comparisons/speculations

1. Would you go back to Vietnam if you could? Why/why not?

2. Do you think that American teenagers are respectful towards their parents? Are you afraid that your children will act less respectful towards you if they have American friends? In what ways? Do your friends talk much about this? What do they say?

3. How do the different members of your family feel about living here?

4. What kinds of food do you eat at home? Did you find it hard to get used to American food?

5. What do you do in your home to try to maintain Vietnamese culture? What kinds of things do you teach your children about Vietnamese culture?

## IV. Language Usage

1. What languages do you speak? How well?

2. What languages have you studied in school? How long? Where? (including refugee camps)

3. Who lives in your house? What language(s) do they speak? How well? What language do you speak with each one of them most of the time?

4. When do you prefer to speak English? Why? When do you prefer to speak Vietnamese? Why?

5. Do you think you speak English exactly like the Americans you know? If not, how is your English different from theirs?

6. Do you think your English sounds like your (children's) English? If not, how is your English different from theirs?

7. Does anyone you know worry that Vietnamese refugee children will stop speaking and using Vietnamese? What do they do about it? What do they say?

8. Do you read Vietnamese? Do you read books or magazines in Vietnamese? Do you write letters to people in Vietnam? Do you spend much time reading or writing Vietnamese?

9. Do you want your children to continue to speak Vietnamese? What do you do to encourage them to speak Vietnamese?

APPENDIX A

## Adolescent Questionnaire

### I. Life in Vietnam

1. How old were you when you left Vietnam? Do you remember much about your life there?
2. What kind of school did you go to in Vietnam? How was it different from schools in America? What did you wear? What subjects did you study? What were your teachers like?
3. Describe the city or town you lived in.
4. What work did your parents do?
5. Do you remember ever getting lost as a child? What happened? How about brothers or sisters who got lost? Have you ever gotten lost since you've been in the U.S.?
6. Do you know any good Vietnamese stories or folktales? Can you tell me one?
7. Tell me about your escape from Vietnam. Did you spend any time in a refugee camp? Where? What was it like?

### II. Current Life

1. How do you spend a typical day now? What are some of the things you have to do?
2. Do you like to watch TV? What are some of your favorite TV programs? Can you tell me about one of the recent ones you saw? What happened?
3. Do you like music? What kind of music do you like? Why? Do you have a favorite singer or group? What are they like?
4. Do you have a lot of relatives living around here? Do you get together for holidays like Tet? Can you remember one of these get-togethers that was particularly fun? What happened?
5. Do you have special chores that you're supposed to do around home? What are they? What happens if you don't do them?
6. Are there special things that happen in school that you really like?
7. Are your best friends mostly American or mostly Vietnamese? Was it had to get to know Americans at school? Why? How did you do it?
8. Are your neighbors mostly Americans or mostly Vietnamese?
9. Do you belong to any religious or community groups?
10. What kind of job/education would you like to get in the future?

## III. Comparisons/Speculations

1. Would you go back to Vietnam if you could? Why/why not?
2. Some people say that Vietnamese teenagers are not as repsectful to their parents here in the U.S. as they were in Vietnam. What do you think?
3. How do the different members of your family feel about living here?
4. What kinds of food do you eat at home? Did you find it hard to get used to American food?
5. Do you like the weather here better than the weather in Vietnam? Why?
6. What do your parents do in your home to try to maintain Vietnamese culture? Do you try to follow Vietnamese customs?

## IV. Language Usage

1. What languages do you speak? How well?
2. What languages have you studied in school? How long? Where? (including refugee camps)
3. Who lives in your house? What language(s) do they speak? How well? What language do you speak with each one of them most of the time?
4. When do you prefer to speak English? Why? When do you prefer to speak Vietnamese? Why?
5. Do you think you speak English exactly like the Americans you know? If not, how is your English different from theirs?
6. Do you think your English sounds like your parents' English? If not, how is your English different from theirs?
7. Does anyone you know worry about Vietnamese refugee kids keeping up their Vietnamese? What do they do? What do they say?
8. Do you read Vietnamese? Do you read books or magazines in Vietnamese? Do you write letters to people in Vietnam? Do you spend much time reading or writing Vietnamese?
9. Do you want to continue to speak Vietnamese? Do your parents want you to? What do they do to encourage you?